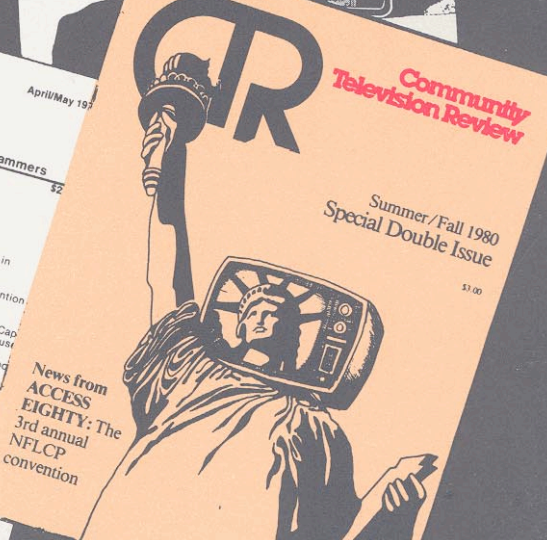
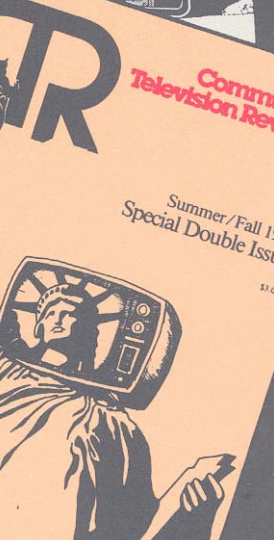
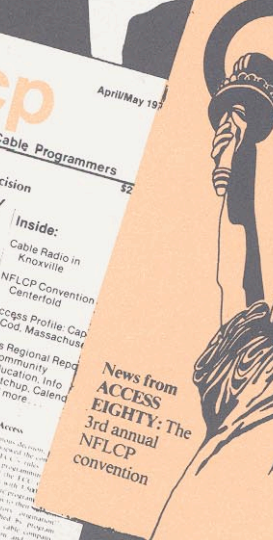
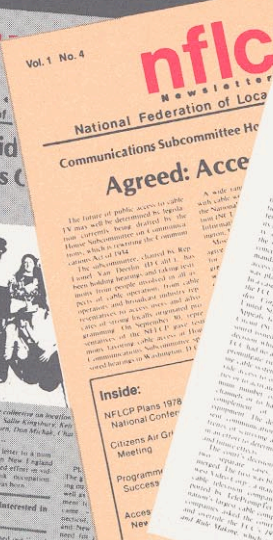
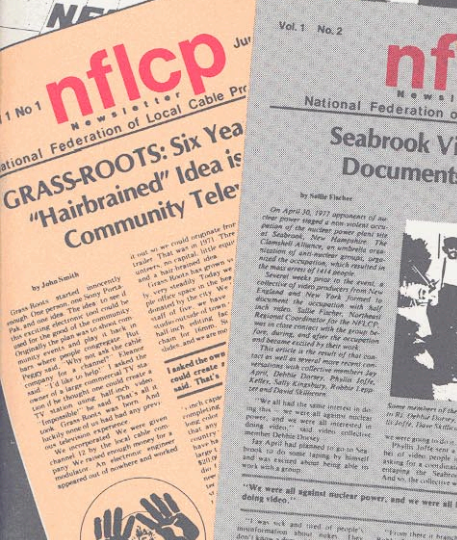


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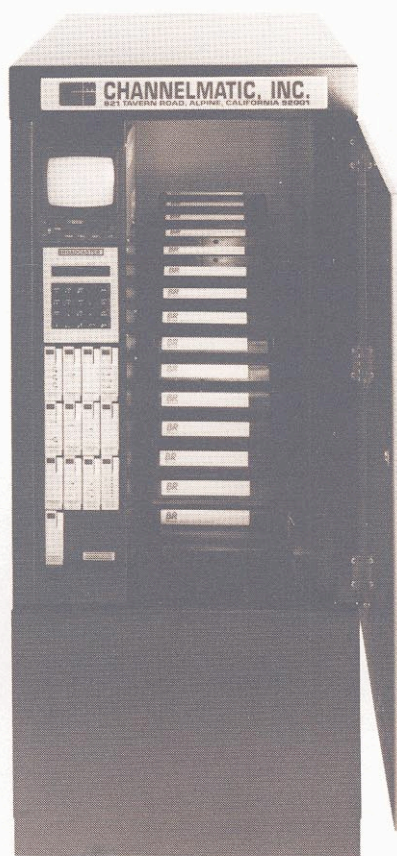
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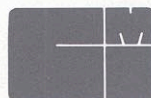
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Letter From The Managing Editor

This very special issue of the *Community Television Review* celebrates NFLCP's tenth anniversary. In this edition, we will explore the rich heritage of local cable programming. This material attempts to capture the spirit of the early days of community television and shed new light on the dynamics behind NFLCP's development. We hope it contributes to the reader's understanding of how the community programming movement evolved and developed.

I would like to thank all of those individuals who contributed to this issue: George Stoney, Sue Buske, Dave Bloch, Andy Beecher, Catherine Boggs, Henry Geller. And my special thanks goes to Susan Bednarczyk for her thorough historical overview of NFLCP. Susan's 15-year retrospective on NFLCP and community television is a "tour de force," and she took a great deal of time out of her busy schedule to produce it. Thank's, Susan!

This issue holds special significance for me because it is the last issue of *CTR* that I will edit. In August, I will be leaving NFLCP to attend law School.

I found editing *CTR* an extremely rewarding experience, because in my view, community television is one of the most dynamic forces within the telecommunications industry. It is also one of the few bright spots the video marketplace has to offer. Unfortunately, deregulation of the communications industry is now in full force. The FCC has eliminated nearly every public interest requirement for broadcasting that it could legally eliminate, and concentration of media ownership has drastically increased in the 1980s.

In spite of these disturbing developments, our nation is fortunate that alternative media is alive and well. I believe we are fortunate that community television is among the bright spots, because in my view, one cannot envision any feasible reforms of the telecommunications industry that would have been more significant than the incredible growth that local cable programming has realized during the last few years.

There will be many fights in the years to come to preserve this valuable resource. And when I return from law school I hope I get the opportunity to provide some support to community television in its struggle.

Paul D'Ari

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A serious error appeared in the last issue of the Community Television Review. At the end of "Cable Access and Social Change: Eight Case Studies" by Barbara Wolf, we listed the names and addresses of the producers mentioned in the article. Unfortunately, the typesetter accidentally put Trella Laughlin's name (a producer of a program that addresses the concerns of the black community) with the address for Tom Metzger (producer of "Race and Reason," the Ku Klux Klan program).

If you want to get in touch with Trella Laughlin, do not write to her at the address we listed. You can contact her at the address below:

Trella Laughlin
Let The People Speak
P.O. Box 49465
Austin, TX 78765

We sincerely apologize for the error. The following is a letter to the editor from Trella Laughlin.

Dear Editor:

A few months ago, I was approached by Ms. Barbara Wolf for an interview for her article on "Cable Access and Social Change" for your publication (Vol. 9, No. 1, 1986). Although Ms. Wolf did not misquote me, I have several serious problems with both the way she wrote the article (leaving out the important political content), the way it was edited (placing it next to her article on the Ku Klux Klan), and definitely a problem with your magazine's carelessness in publishing my name and giving KKK's Tom Metzger's address under my name for people who oppose the klan to write.

If I had known that Ms. Wolf intended to give uncritical publicity to a racist like Tom Metzger, I would not have agreed to be part of the "case studies." Maybe she, and you don't take the KKK seriously. I would suggest you study their history: armed, secret organization that advocates—and carries out—terror and violence against blacks, other third world people, Jews, gays, feminists, and white people who don't support racism and actively oppose the klan. By juxtaposing an article about a program that is anti-racist such as "Let the People Speak!" with the KKK, you make it appear that there are simply "extremists on the left" (anti-racism is extremist?) and extremists on the right (the KKK, Nazis, *et al.*). This is a very dangerous, and false, juxtaposition. Anti-racist people have nothing in common with white supremacist murderers, have no practice of attempting to terrorize people who oppose them, and have no long history of rape, crossburn-

ings, threats, beatings, fire-bombings, assassinations, or night-riding on families. Perhaps you choose to forget the murders of civil rights workers in Mississippi, bombing schoolchildren in Birmingham, the gunning down of Denver radio host Alan Berg, or the very recent kidnapping and bombing of 150 schoolchildren in Wyoming by a member of the Posse Comitatus, a right-wing "survivalist" group like the KKK.

Ms. Wolf's "chatty" tone and lumping us all together (Trella, Dorothy, "Tom") reduces these life-and-death political issues into just a televised argument over "freedom of speech" by people who don't agree. How opportunistic of both the author and this magazine to interview anti-racist people who put their lives on the line for justice and follow the interview with publicity for racism! It is one of the serious failings of access television that terrorist organizations like the KKK can be lumped in with serious producers who do not advocate the kind of white supremacist world the klan has been trying to force for over 120 years!

Further, Ms. Wolf presented Metzger in such a light as to be uncritical of what he *really* stands for. Of course, he pretends, on television, to be for the interests of white, working-class people. The klan does not represent the interests of white people, but the KKK has realized they had to tone down their obvious racist slurs, stop openly advocating murder, and drag out their three-piece suits and hang their sheets in the closet, for a while. This doesn't mean they don't still terrorize people and actually do many violent acts against all kinds of folks—when neither you nor Ms. Wolf is there to witness it and write about it.

Additionally, this lack of seriousness on your part and a kind of "benign racism" (if advocating racist terror can be called "benign") becomes apparent in your careless disregard for anti-klan activists' safety. You can protest, all you want, that your error in printing my name and then giving the KKK's California address was a printing accident. Anyone who does any real work against racism and the KKK will tell you that because of threats, actual attempts on their lives, and constant harassment, no one with any consciousness and conscience would be so blase as to not check this before publication.

This is consistent with opportunism. Since neither Ms. Wolf nor your publication appears to have taken a stand *against* KKK racist terror, you are not under any attack from them. In fact, your uncritical presentation *promotes* them. You just put out a pat formula article, with no discernment whatsoever. You stick an article about me, Mrs. Dorothy Turner of the Black Citizens' Task Force, "Let the People Speak!", and our community's work *for* a just world and *against* white supremacy next to an uncritical article about a man, and his army, that advocate and practice: *genocide*.

It's that simple. As a credentialed journalist myself, I know all the media tricks. Believe me, there is *no* middle-ground when it comes to genocide. You either are aggressively for the Ku Klux Klan or passively try to act "objective" while advocating the *status quo*, or you stand up against the KKK, get counted on the side of history, justice, and change, and actually do some real

work that helps produce some positive difference. You, inadvertently, or because you are not dealing with your own racism, have come out on the side of the Ku Klux Klan.

If I were you, I'd move quickly.

—Trella Laughlin
Austin, TX

Editor's Response: *The purpose of Barbara Wolf's article was to present a survey of social and political issues programming. Barbara and I avoided taking a position on any of the case studies, and we felt it was important to present as diverse a group as possible. What we tried to present was simply a sampling of the kinds of social and political issues programs that appear on public access channels. Our readers are primarily professionals in the community television field (we do not address a general audience) and it is important for them to know who is using these channels across the country.*

It was quite appropriate for us to include "Race and Reason" because it is a highly controversial program that is being sent to a large number of community television centers across the country. Many of our members are programming managers who may one day be asked to cablecast "Race and Reason" or a similar program. To do their job better, they need to be prepared for this possibility.

I think it is also important to point out that the purpose of NFLCP is "to protect and increase freedom of expression, diversity of ideas and community communications through the medium of cable television." NFLCP exists to promote complete, uncensored access to video for all citizens. Therefore, regardless of the circumstances, it is inappropriate for NFLCP to take a stand for or against any constitutionally protected speech. Sometimes this puts us in an uncomfortable position. But since we are uncompromising advocates of the First Amendment, it is the price we have to pay.

Best Wishes & Happy 10th Anniversary to the NFLCP.

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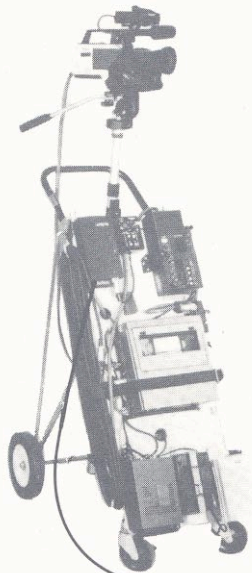
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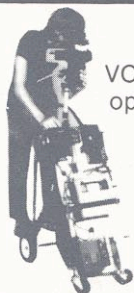
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Public Access: A Word About Pioneers

By George Stoney

The other day, Fred Johnson and I were at a New York State Cable Commission hearing about public access on the 44th floor of the World Trade Center. Fred looked around and remarked: "I never though when I was fighting for public access back in Kentucky I'd be, one day, in a room like this with so many men in suits and ties talking about the idea. There don't seem to be any poor people here. The only blacks here are obviously employees of the cable companies. I guess access has gone establishment."

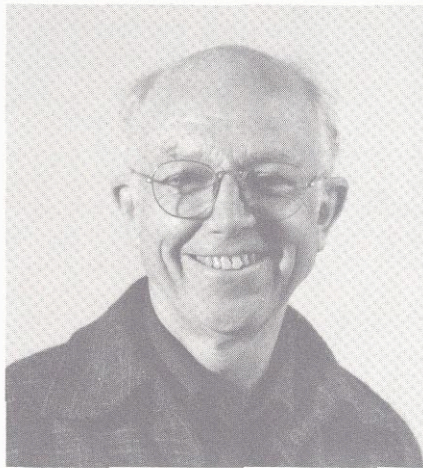
There was an understandable note of regret in Fred's voice. He is one of the movement's pioneers and has served for some years as head of NFLCP's Advocacy Committee (on the NFLCP's Board of Directors), so he is more knowledgeable than most about the dangers the discussion in that room poses for public access.

Public access has become something everybody is in favor of, like motherhood. But, like motherhood, access needs constant care and feeding. However, at the hearing some of these same gentlemen who were praising the concept of access—even claiming to have been pioneers in its creation—were doing everything they could to kill it off.

By now, over 1,200 cable systems in the U.S. are offering access in some form. Access producers, almost all volunteers, are making an estimated 40,000 hours of new programming each week. Many access centers have been in business for more than a dozen years.

We now know what it takes to make access work: a clearly defined legitimacy in the franchise and in law; independence from the forever vacillating policies of cable companies; adequate and constant financial support, and a staff of dedicated facilitators who understand and believe in the concept. But what is the concept of public access to cable television? At this hearing, it was clear each speaker had his or her own definition. So it might be useful to look back and see how the idea got started and how it has evolved.

I'm sometimes referred to as "the father of public access" or, more often these



George Stoney is regarded by many as the father of public access.

days, "the grandfather of access." Well, I'm certainly not ashamed of the ascription and, as any good lawyer will tell you, paternity is easy to ascribe and difficult to disprove. I do know there were a lot of people who were already talking about the idea back in the late 1960s when I first became excited about access.

Colin Low of the National Film Board of Canada had created a program called "Challenge for Change," designed to use film (and later, video) as a device for helping ordinary citizens create a dialogue with the Canadian Government. I was invited to be executive producer of that program from 1968 to 1970, and was exposed to a whole staff of people who had absorbed the access concept from Colin, from John Kemeny (who preceded me) and from Dorothy Henaut, the editor of our *Newsletter* that spread the philosophy across Canada, the U.S. and abroad, finding particularly eager readers in the third world.

By 1970, more than one-half of Canada's families were cable subscribers. We found we could get space on those primitive 12-channel systems (no satellites then to bring down premium services) to share citizen-directed films and tapes with the communities. By the time I came back to the States to join the Film/TV faculty at

New York University, I was already prepared to understand what all the shouting was about at public meetings I attended on cable access. Thea Sklover, Russell Connor and many others were demanding that public access channels be made a part of the New York City franchise. They had help from such establishment fixtures as Fred Friendly (of the famous CBS *See It Now* team with Edward R. Morrow) who was on the Mayor's cable advisory committee. One of his colleagues was Sidney Dean, an advertising executive and visionary (then and now) who championed the concept of "leased access" as a way of giving independent producers a chance.

Representatives from half a dozen community video collectives who had been inspired by the writings of Marshall McLuhan, claimed the platform and demanded to be heard: collectives like *Global Village*, the *Videofrecks*, the *People's Communications Network*. We read *Radical Softwear* to cheer us on. And, wonder of wonders, our strongest champion was Irving Kahn, head of Tele-Prompter, and at that time, the most powerful influence in the cable industry. He was eager to give us a welcome on an access channel as soon as his franchise was operational in Upper Manhattan.

What we all lacked in those heady first days of access was any clear notion about the kind of organizational support it would take to keep programs going over the long haul. In 1971, Red Burns joined me in a proposal to the Markle Foundation. We proposed to set up a center where field tests could be made. For the next half a dozen years, the Alternate Media Center at New York University sent out access organizers to such far-flung places as Reading, PA; Bakersfield, CA; DeKalb, IL; Orlando, FL; and more. We also moved into areas of Manhattan as they were wired. (Fifteen years later Manhattan is still the only NYC Borough to have cable installed.)

Red's great strength was her background in the entertainment business and the marketing of films and television shows. She knew personally a great many

of the men who were buying into cable as it was beginning to move from being hundreds of "Mom and Pop" operations to an industry dominated by a few multiple system operators (M.S.O.s). Her friend John Gault (now President of Manhattan Cable) was at that time a Vice President of American Television and Communications Corporation (ATC), one of the larger M.S.O.s. He helped Red find a welcome for experiments with a number of his systems. Whatever one may think about the present posture of the cable industry toward public access, I want to acknowledge that we would never have been able to test the concept as we did, in places where there was high cable penetration, without the help of people like Earl Hait, manager of ATC's system in Reading, PA and others of his persuasion who shared our vision about the possibilities of access.

One can't use the word "vision" in this context without mentioning Ralph Lee Smith, whose book *The Wired Nation* kept our heads spinning. There was also Rev. Everett Parker, the undaunted head of the Office of Communications of the United Church of Christ, who rallied

church folks all over the country to the cause of access with his workshops and with his pamphlet, *A Citizen's Guide to Cable Television*.

Finally, there was Nicholas Johnson, the only person on the Federal Communications Commission who would lift his eyes from the minutia of over-the-air broadcast regulation to recognize that a new and potentially important force called cable TV was entering the field. In the early 1970s, the only portable and affordable video equipment available to us was the reel-to-reel porta-pak. We were limited to black and white. Precise editing was all but impossible. The quality of second generation tapes was well below FCC standards required for broadcast. We knew if the FCC required cable to meet the technical standards required for broadcasting, we would be limited to "going live." We talked with Nick, put a porta-pak in his hands, and he was hooked.

Johnson not only persuaded the FCC's engineers that our porta-pak tapes were good enough to be carried on cable, he persuaded the FCC to issue an order requiring cable systems to offer public access channels. Existing systems and sys-

tems with less than 3,500 subscribers were exempt from the requirement, as were those outside the top 100 markets. In fact, the clauses were so general almost any cable management that wished to do so could get a waiver. But many operators saw this as the wave of the future and agreed to offer access channels anyway.

A lot of local operators, particularly those with strong local ties, saw access as a device for attracting extra subscribers. Some of them had invested in equipment and studios to do programming themselves, only to find that the cost of operating such a local news effort couldn't be covered by the advertising revenues. Some of these operators lent their unused studios and equipment to local access producers. For example, this is how John Smith, a former newspaperman, started access in Aspen, CO. Aspen access flourishes today, a decade and a half after its founding.

At the Alternate Media Center, we kept hearing about these isolated pioneers and were soon swapping tapes and experiences with many of them. Ted Carpenter came by our shop over the Bleeker St. Cinema in New York City, bought a handbook,

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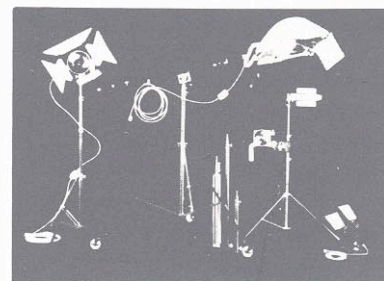
looked at some tapes, and went out and bought a porta-pak for himself. He took it on a tour of Appalachia where he worked as a Vista Volunteer. A year or so later, Ted was running a public access production center that served a dozen small cable systems within 50 miles of Johnson City, TN. During the early 1970s, there must have been dozens of other access pioneers like John and Ted operating throughout the country.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) began getting requests from a great number of local producers for funds to produce tapes for cable. In 1973, they asked me to develop some method for applying what we have learned at the Alternate Media Center on a national basis. With funds from the NEA and with the much assistance from Brian Owen, then strategically located in the offices of the National Cable Television Association as its advisor on local programming, I designed the Alternate Media Center Cable Internship Program. It was the graduates of this program who, three years later, founded the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers.

In the early 1970s, we were not making distinctions between public access and educational access or government access (and today no such distinctions are made in some of our most successful and stable access centers). All programs went on a single channel, if we were lucky enough to have a channel all to ourselves. The same philosophy applied to all: production was done by volunteers, not by city employees and not by professional staffs of schools and libraries. Access channels were a place where information was exchanged; it was not a mouthpiece for the government in power or the school administration (as I see happening all too often these days).

There were no "theme channels" where a few major arts organizations could dominate, freezing out the neighborhood drama group in their search for "only quality programming." When all the programs were carried together, there was less temptation to let major institutions like hospitals or medical societies block programming from unorthodox folks, like midwives.

Volunteers in the access centers were not isolated: they covered both the city



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council and the folk festival. And because it was a group of volunteers made up of boy scouts and high school students who covered city affairs, the cable officer was less likely to claim the lion's share of franchise fees to support his staff. Today, this tendency of access centers and city cable officers to see themselves as adversaries is a major threat to the continued funding of the whole enterprise.

The idea of dedicated channels grew out of the so-called "cable wars" of the late 1970s when MSOs made impossibly elaborate offers to cities in their attempts to win franchises. Most of us who had some years of access experience under our belts knew that all these promises of high band studios, mobile vans and other goodies were, if they were ever delivered at all, dangerous snares. If delivered, these things would trap access centers in a technical world that would be dominated by professionals, not volunteers. We would prefer to bargain for several small neighborhood studios in a metropolitan franchise (see Atlanta for example) rather than one or two show places, as is now being proposed as an alternative in many cities. Some of us even advocated the widespread use of one-half inch technology over the three quarter mode that had, by the late 1970s, become the standard for access. The quality, reliability, portability, and price of the current one-half inch rigs indicates that we were going in the right direction.

All along, there has been a battle over access between those who want it dominated by high tech and a professional look and those who believe that the substance of the programs and the involvement they offer ordinary people is the important measure. More and more in those systems where the cable operators have been responsible for access the tendency has been to "go professional," the result being almost indistinguishable from company dominated local origination. Fortunately, in an increasing number of cities, access advocates are insisting at the time of refranchising that they be allowed to set up their own independent, third party organizations.

There is usually a catch. The resulting agreement often means less money is being spent on the access effort. (See Atlanta, for example). Even so, I still believe the move toward independence is a healthy one. We know by now that cable ownerships change hands frequently. Companies make agreements and then break them. Our only safety for continuous support



At close of the Canadian National Conference of Social Work (the theme was "Participation by Recipients of Service"), Dorothy Henaut of the Challenge For Change staff presented a tape on what had transpired at the conference.

for access rests in the requirements of the franchises themselves, vigorously enforced by someone at city hall.

As cable conglomerates continue to amalgamate, the local managers who, like Earl Hait (formerly the manager of Berks Cable in Reading), were often supportive of access, and now being replaced by system analysts out of Denver or New York City who don't expect to be around long. Access is considered a bother because it is generally not something that fits nearly into his or her system of control. At the recent New York State Cable Commission hearing (which I referred to earlier), John Gault accurately described his early assistance to access, and went on to praise Manhattan Cable's access operation as a "model," although there are no free studios, no free equipment, no center where people can be trained and stimulated to do good work, no control at all in setting its rules or influencing its operations. Is Manhattan to become a model for the industry?

Spokesmen for the industry, praise the concept of access, while insisting that their "First Amendment rights" are put in jeopardy if they do not have control over everything carried on their systems. If they win this argument, in or out of court, then their commitment to access amounts to little more than *noblesse oblige*. Whatever promises are made will be "subject to negotiation" every time there is a change of ownership or management. In such an atmosphere, public access will have a hard time surviving, for all our good volunteer energy.

My own conviction is that the concept behind public access to cable is so strong that not even a major victory by the cable industry in court can snuff it out. We've had more than a decade and a half of experience now. None can question the fact, as they might have a few years back, that volunteers can use technically sophisticated electronic equipment to speak for themselves and to offer a forum for others.

Eventually I believe this access principal will be applied to *all* electronic media . . . to P.B.S., to the networks and to radio. You may call me a "visionary" and I will accept the accusation. Such an idea is no more incredible than our rule of "one person, one vote" must have seemed back in the 18th century.

Today, limiting one's definition of "democracy" to "one person one vote" would be considered, at best, unsatisfactory. Over the years we've developed all kinds of necessary elaborations, such as rules for primaries, qualifications for candidates, the very structure of government itself. One would find a definition of "public access" equally unsatisfactory that limited it to "a first come, first served soap box or public forum." We, too, have developed through experience over the past fifteen years, strategies and practices that make it serve vital functions in city

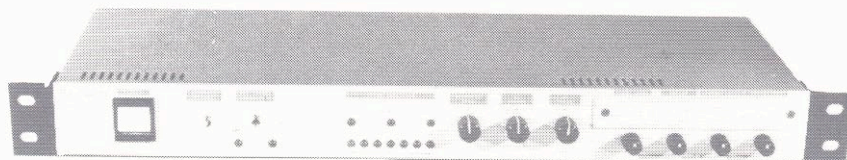
government, in the maintenance of public participation in our school systems, in the enrichment of art, in the extension of local control over resources . . . in the extension of democracy itself.

Without doubt the most important social phenomenon of the latter part of the 20th century has been the enfranchisement of blacks, brought into being by the civil rights movement. When the idea of access is fully implemented, when it is carried beyond cable to all electronic media as I am confident it will be one day, this movement that is absorbing so much of our energies and concern today will be seen as one every bit as important for the welfare of all Americans as was civil rights.

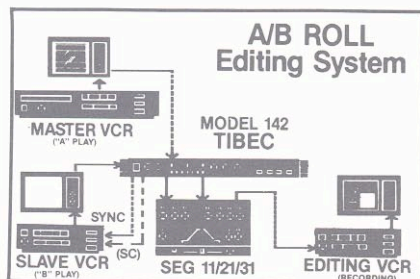
George Stoney, widely regarded as the father of public access, is a professor of film and video at New York University.

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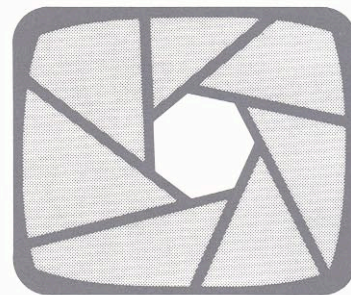
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The Development of Community Television

By Sue Miller Buske

The development of public access displays a remarkable parallel to the invention of the printing press in the 1450s. Prior to the invention of the printing press, few people had access to written communications. For example, in the Middle Ages, only the church, feudal lords, and other wealthy individuals could afford to employ the services of a scholar or a monk to copy and illustrate documents.

The printing press revolutionized communications. That invention made it possible for a much larger number of people to use print to widely disseminate their ideas. It decentralized the means of distributing print communications.

Today, a handful of motion picture companies and television networks dominate the video marketplace. They determine what most of America will watch on television.

However, we are in the midst of a revolution in video communications, and it may be just as significant as the invention of the printing press. This new revolution is embodied in the public access movement, and it is beginning to decentralize the means of video communications. With public access, all citizens have the opportunity to learn how to communicate with video, and they are provided a free delivery system to reach their neighbors. Cable access has created an electronic forum where all interested citizens can appear before their community to share information, discuss ideas, record local events, and entertain.

Local cable programming is almost as old as cable television itself. Most early local origination efforts were developed by small independent cable owners with ties to the local community. Because of their interest in community affairs, some of these small local owners began local programming in the early 1950s.

By the late 1960s, there were at least 30 cablesystems originating their own programming. However, it was a difficult service to develop, largely because of high equipment expenses. In the mid-1960s, lower cost videotape recorders were avail-

able (although they still cost \$15,000 to \$20,000), but they were crude and generated technical problems. Black-and-white cameras were also expensive and bulky (with turret lenses).

However, in 1968, Sony's introduction of the low-cost, one-half inch portapak, revolutionized the use of video throughout the United States. Sony's low-cost innovation made video cameras widely available, and it provided the impetus for the development of the alternative video movement. Many artists and activists (with no background in film or video) began experimenting with the medium.

The early access movement was closely connected to the counter-cultural movement of the late 1960s. Access was connected to the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the student rights movement, and the environmental movement. At that time, there was a group of activists who saw video as an instrument for social change, and they used it to help empower the disenfranchised.

One of the first examples of a form of access was the National Board of Canada's Challenge For Change project. That project attempted to bring the people in charge of government programs together with the recipients of those programs. A typical Challenge For Change tape would feature a recipient of a government program talking about how he or she felt about the program and how it could be improved.

In 1970, the New York City Board of Estimate awarded two cable franchises in Manhattan. The franchise agreements stipulated that two cable channels were to be reserved for use by the public on a first come, first served basis. A short time later, a storefront community video center was opened in Greenwich Village. It was affiliated with the newly created Alternate Media Center at New York University, and its purpose was to conduct experiments in community access.

The early 1970s also brought an advance in cable television technology. It was now possible for cablesystems to deliver up to 35 channels. This new capability made it increasingly possible to dedi-

cate channel capacity for the transmission of local programming.

In 1972, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), established its mandatory cable access rules. These rules required all cablesystems in the top 100 television markets to supply free access channels for public, educational, and governmental use. Any group or individual who requested access time was guaranteed up to five minutes, free of charge on the public access channel.

In 1974, the Alternate Media Center (AMC) received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to create a cable internship program. AMC placed nine video producers in communities across the country where they helped establish local cable programming operations. AMC trained the interns and supervised their field experience. These interns were sent to Bloomington, IN; Concord, NH; Madison, WI; Dubuque, IA; Fort Lee, NJ; Stockton, CA; Buffalo, NY; and Johnstown, TN. As the cable internship project grew, AMC became the primary repository of information about access programming and the access movement.

By the mid-1970s, access was beginning to take root in many communities. But access channels were still the exception rather than the rule, and access pioneers were frequently operating in total isolation. There was little networking of information or programming. Realizing how critical this exchange of information was to the growth and stability of access and local cable programming, members of AMC's internship program created the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP) in 1976.

As the NFLCP network grew, local programming staff, producers, city officials, and educators found the federation to be a vital resource for educating themselves and others in all aspects of local cable programming. The NFLCP also provided a strong support system for citizens who were participating in franchise processes and advocating community access provisions in their franchise agreements.

However, in 1979, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated all federal requirements for public access. The court ruled that the FCC did not have the statutory authority to require access, and following this decision, the protection of access was left to local governments.

Ironically, the access movement grew tremendously following this decision. By this time, the concept of access had become widely known, and the cable industry was entering a period of rapid expansion. The development of satellite delivered premium services substantially increased industry profits. This innovation created a rush to wire the big cities where there was a promise for even greater profits. There was stiff competition for franchises in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and offers for public access were one of

the most important parts of the proposals that cable operators submitted to local governments.

As a result of the cable franchising wars (and NFLCP's influence) hundreds of cities and counties now have public, educational, and governmental access programming. In 1976 (when NFLCP was formed), less than 100 community cable programming centers existed in the United States. Today, that number has risen to at least 1,200.

The NFLCP played a critical role in the development of national cable communications policy. In 1981, the NFLCP formed a coalition of national organizations concerned with local cable programming and how it would be affected by federal legislation. Over the next three years, the coalition helped defeat many legisla-

tive proposals that threatened access. These efforts resulted in the inclusion of strong access language in the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984. Through the act, Congress expressed clear support for access programming and stated that public access conveys the free speech goals of the First Amendment.

The access movement began as a part of the counter-culture in the late 1960s. Since then it has grown tremendously and has now entered the mainstream. And there is every indication that it will continue to grow for many years to come.

Sue Miller Buske is executive director of NFLCP.



Access pioneer Sue Miller Buske shooting a scene in Dubuque, IA while she was an intern at the Alternate Media Center.

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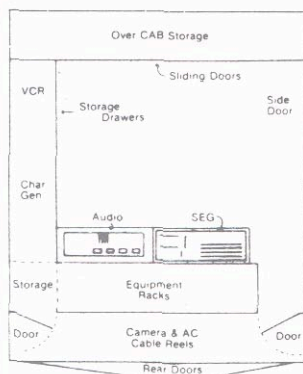
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GOVERNMENT ACCESS CORNER

The Early Days of Government Access

By Andy Beecher

On a bad day today in 1986, the government television operator need only recall that bad day in 1974, when the one-half inch reel-to-reel tape fell to the floor, left its dull side up, and rolled all the way down the hall to the planning department; or when the first live signal from the city council meeting looked like the first video of the moon. There is no doubt that the technology of early video centers often presented reliability and credibility problems.

Yet, those were exciting times! To be providing an electronic "window on government," enabling citizens to view the decision-making process in the raw, and to give numerous departments the opportunity to deliver and publicize their services was a wonderful and meritable endeavor, particularly during this post-Watergate period when people wanted to see more openness in their government.

The concept of government access grew out of the public access movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Access advocates who believed the disenfranchised should have access to the tools of television production and transmission also supported the public's right to know how governmental decisions were made and how government aimed to increase public awareness of social and political concerns.

During this period, several studies advocating the need for access to cable television for individuals, community groups, local governments, schools, libraries and health institutions were conducted by groups such as the Jones Commission and the Sloan Commission. These studies formed the foundation for the Federal Communications Commission's 1972 cable rules, which set minimum requirements for public, educational, governmental, and leased access.

According to Steve Effros, a former FCC staffmember who drafted the 1972 access rules (he is now executive director of the Community Antenna Television Association), "The cities really wanted to do things. I think a primary reason for this was that the libraries in the 1970s were interested in the potential of producing

cable programming. . . . There was an activist head of the American Library Association at the time . . . and it was inevitable that cable operators were going to give them a channel."

Effros said that in the Commission's development of the 1972 rules, "Access was not an issue of contention. It was generally felt the access concept was a good one. The question was: should it be limited? The answer was yes." He explained that "Some cities asked for large amounts of channel space to be reserved for access in perpetuity . . . without even setting up budgets to operate them. . . . This was where the contention between the cities and cable operators grew."

The FCC was being approached by many interest groups who wanted to be represented in the development of guidelines for access. Effros explained, "If the Commission (had) just set up two channels, it could have sparked local wars. . . . Fire departments wanted channels for training; schools wanted channels, one for the elementary school, one for the high school, one for the community college; some city councils wanted them too. The Commission opted to establish the now famous "PEG" access channels (public, educational, and governmental), as well as leased access. One of each of these was required in franchises in the top 100 television markets, augmented by the "N plus one" rule, which stipulated that when one channel was filled, the franchising authority could require that an additional channel of that type of access be put on the system.

Effros said, "The cities were not being realistic in their desires for quantities of channels. They were told that access was the greatest thing since sliced bread, but nobody focused on the cost of doing it right, making it viable." He said, "One of the great ironies is that while the cities were so interested in channels of all types for access, a proposal that was put forward requiring allocation of a portion of the franchise fee for access, was defeated by several of the major cities involved in franchising at the time."

This conflict did not leave much room for optimism for activists who wanted to see local government programming develop in their communities. However the institutionalization of the term "government access" in the 1972 rules, and the guarantee for channels to facilitate its use during a five-year experimental period, provided sufficient grounds for the development of a number of successful government access operations.

To illustrate the earliest development of government access, I have selected two centers which might have been the first two government access centers in the country (I stand to be corrected by anyone with a pen and a recollection).

Tulsa

Tulsa, OK may have been the site of the first "full blown" government access programming operation. I recall hearing about the Tulsa center during my earliest days in community television. Tulsa's rapid development of its government access facility was in line with its progressive character and increased growth during the early 1970s. At a time when nearly all cable systems were 12-channel "community antenna" operations, Tulsa had a 35-channel system. United Cable was the cable operator, and had its national headquarters in Tulsa; Tulsa was United's model system.

Tom Ledbetter, Tulsa's first government access coordinator in 1973, explained that "United couldn't find enough programming to fill the channels, so they encouraged the city to do something about it. . . . At the time, Tulsa had a terrific mayor with a great vision. Mayor Robert LaFortune, an independent oil man, got involved with local government, and then served as mayor for over a decade. . . . One of his chief goals was to let people know more about what was going on. He really liked to run an open government." Ledbetter said, "Another terrific person was the library director, the late Allie Beth Martin. She was president of the American Library Association at the time, and a very exciting person to work

The logo for National College Television (NCTV) is centered within a stylized, dark silhouette of a classical building facade. The facade features a triangular pediment at the top, supported by two thick columns on either side of a central rectangular opening. The NCTV logo itself consists of the letters 'nctv' in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font, with a dense, stippled or 'grainy' texture. Below the letters, the words 'NATIONAL COLLEGE TELEVISION' are written in a clean, uppercase, sans-serif font. The entire graphic is set against a background of faint, repeating text from various university names, such as 'U of Illinois', 'SUNY/Fredonia', 'Rochester Inst', 'U of Co', 'North', 'Boise', 'U of NM', 'Texas Tech', 'Washington U', 'Stevenson', 'South', and 'State'.

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with. . . . And she and the mayor collaborated. . . . Both were instrumental in getting the city to support a government access program."

It was decided that both the city and county of Tulsa would jointly operate the channel, since the start-up funds would come from revenue sharing earmarked for both levels of government. The operation would be located in the library, within the new civic center. Ledbetter explained that the library was chosen as the home for the agency because "it was neutral ground. . . . Nobody there favored anybody."

The cable operator's contribution was a full-time channel, and about \$150,000 per year (1973 dollars!) came from the revenue sharing monies. "Much of the first year's funds went into the building of a studio, which was in remodelled space in the library," Ledbetter said.

When Ledbetter was hired in August, 1973, he began to call around to find out what people had been doing with government channels in other communities. He quickly found that he was virtually alone in his endeavor. Inspired, perhaps, by the library environment in which he was working, Ledbetter compiled what he called "the book," which provided a description of what he was doing, along with "how-to" information for future government access operators. Over the next few years, "the book" was widely distributed and assisted many cities in their efforts to establish government access operations.

Tulsa's city-county channel employed three full time people in the beginning, and it grew to four and one-half at the height of its development. It was similar to many "modern" government programming centers which were established later, during the franchising era of the early 1980s. It was not, however, blessed with today's relatively rock-solid reliable technology. According to Ledbetter, "We worked with old style one-inch recorders, which were state-of-the-art, but more trouble than they were worth. . . . Eventually, we traded these for three-quarter inch gear. . . . we also used one-half inch reel-to-reel recorders, one-quarter inch Akai format, and super 8 sound film. . . . Everything we did was in color."

Tulsa's first programming was library-related. For example, they did book review programs: "Books Sandwiched In," which was a brown bag lunch discussion. City-County Cable 24 also covered city commission meetings, gavel-to-gavel,



Government Access veteran Andy Beecher is an access pioneer. Here he is in Buffalo in the early 1970s while he was an intern with Alternate Media Center.

twice every week, and they did programs with the police and fire departments. They also worked with the Parks Department, and most of the other city and county agencies to develop programs explaining city-county programs and services. Over the years, City-County Cable 24 produced over 200 programs with the health department, initially to let people know what services were available, and then to deliver health information directly to residents.

Ledbetter was reluctant to develop live, call-in shows because he was concerned about technical problems. However, he spoke with Berks Community TV in Reading, PA about their interactive experiments conducted in conjunction with New York University's Alternate Media Center. Ledbetter went to Reading and saw they were using simple technology, with a speakerphone and a microphone in front of it. It was basic, effective and they had no problems with the technology or with callers. He brought the format back to Tulsa and it caught on quickly.

Channel 24 also provided extensive coverage of local elections and other special programs throughout the years of its operation. "There was good support on the city commission," Ledbetter said, "although at the outset there had been some concern that the cameras would favor one politician over another. We explained that we would be as objective as we could, and we worked very hard to maintain that objectivity."

With this rich heritage, one might expect Tulsa City-County Channel 24 to be thriving today. Instead, it's no longer an operational center. According to Ledbetter, "A new mayor was elected. He just plain felt that government should not be supporting media of any type. . . . For example, he felt strongly that CPB [Corporation for Public Broadcasting] should not be receiving any public funds. . . . He was outspoken on the issue. Furthermore, he was just not the type of politician whom you would have expected to want the council meetings on television or to have the government as open as Channel 24 attempted to make it. . . . He had his own agenda at these meetings, and sometimes the turnout of citizens who had seen the agenda on the channel gave him some concern."

In 1976-77, the operating budget for the channel was \$68,000, but Ledbetter said ". . . revenue sharing was being cut back, the county pulled out of the operation, and the mayor started to get Channel 24 out of the city's budget, as well. . . . It took him one and one-half years. . . . The library board was behind us, but would not, in the long run, take on the mayor. . . . The City Commission gave us three months to find alternative funding. We tried local corporate sponsors, but the interest wasn't there . . . (especially since) the city wasn't going to fund it." The cable operator allowed Channel 24 to publish a questionnaire in one of the monthly subscriber billings, and the results demonstrated that most people were in favor of retaining the service. Ledbetter explained, "We even ran these responses, both positive and negative on a message wheel on the channel."

However, in September of 1979, Tulsa City-County Channel 24 ceased operations, and the city hasn't re-established an agency for government cable programming since that time, although because of public interest, from time to time, they did continue covering city commission meetings, using staff pulled from various city departments.

Ledbetter, who now manages a cable system in Colorado says, "I don't miss it, terribly. It was really hard work, and I especially don't miss the politics!"

Perhaps this is an example of an operation which developed too rapidly, or with too narrow a constituency. It was built by an elected executive who had an open door policy, and, as we have seen, that

door closed very quickly once another personality filled the office.

Madison

In Madison, WI (a city noted for its progressive politics), it is perhaps because of that community's ongoing commitment to citizen participation in government—in spite of changes in the council and mayor's office—that the government channel is currently thriving, slowly and methodically, gradually building its political base, its technology, its programming, and its audience.

Merry Sue Smoller, a librarian (note the widespread interest by libraries in government access), was hired as Madison's cable television officer in 1974. She had served on a dynamic committee which had written a new ordinance for the city, establishing a permanent regulatory board and cable programming advisory committee. While Tom Ledbetter was already operating a studio with the latest in industrial quality color video equipment, Smoller needed to pool resources; she borrowed a one-half inch portapak from the fire department and hired a high school intern.

The franchise agreement required the cable operator, Complete Channel TV, to provide coverage of the city council, county commission, and the board of education meetings. Complete Channel covered the meetings live with high quality black-and-white cameras and a mobile switcher (which the local origination crew named "Bertha"). Rod Thole, the company's manager at that time, had a background in public broadcasting, and made an effort to provide quality programming on the system. In addition to the portable equipment, the company built a \$250,000 color studio for local origination, and produced programming from local debates to a highly successful and zany trivia show.

Smoller's first programming on the system was a regular feature presented during council meeting intermissions, which usually featured interviews with the city's aldermen, the mayor, or other individuals involved in local decisionmaking.

"Everything in the city's operation was purchased through general funds," Smoller explained, "... and it was essentially zero-based budgeting." She explained her plans for ongoing facilities and staff, to the city's budget committee. As a result, the operation came closer to her goal of a freestanding, technically sound operation.

The government channel was activated in 1975 with an early Laird character generator, which rolled messages from city departments continuously. "It had limited memory, so it had to be updated frequently," Smoller says. "City 12" was one of only 12 channels on Madison's system at the time, so "channel flippers" came upon these messages quite frequently. "We used the C.G. as a backbone for our development of programming," Smoller said. "People could expect up-to-date messages to appear in a timely manner, and as we added video programming, we were already seen as being reliable and consistent."

Some of the early programs produced at City 12 were: "City Dialogue," which featured man-on-the-street questions and comments, about city government or city issues (these questions and comments were subsequently addressed by the appropriate city officials); "District Reports," a ten-minute presentation by each of Madison's twenty-two aldermen on district and citywide issues; a weekly call-in program produced at Complete Channel's studio by City 12; a regular series with the then-mayor Paul Soglin; and the cablecast of board, committee, and commission meetings.

Smoller's staff grew in size to three full-time employees and about a dozen work-study students. CitiCable's staff is the same size today, and it produces considerably more programming than it did ten years ago (they now produce council and commission meetings themselves). They have also worked with high quality industrial color three-quarter inch equipment since 1982, and they are about to move into a new studio. CitiCable has also provided a great launching pad for careers in community television. In fact, two of NFLCP's current regional coordinators are "veterans" of the agency (Marcia Standiford in the midwest, and myself in the northwest; we are both working for cities).

Merry Sue Smoller, currently the cable regulatory officer for the City of Miami, explained, "The reason CitiCable has been so successful is that it established a base, and it proved itself worthy of funding from the city's general fund over the years. We had to go in with all of the other city agencies to justify our budgets. Despite some "rocky" times, people in the community and on Madison's council have adequately supported the agency to keep it going for over ten years."

* * * * *



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Tulsa grew rapidly due to a visionary mayor with a great deal of commitment to openness in government. However, before the government access operation had time to build a broad political base, a new administration came in and dismantled it. Yet, the experience of Tulsa's City-County Channel is important to us today. First of all during those critical early years of government access, Tulsa was an important model that influenced many government programming operations. In addition, Tulsa's experience provides an instructive account of how vulnerable community television can become when there are changes in local government.

Andy Beecher is programming director at the Metropolitan Area Communications Commission in Beaverton, OR. "Government Access Corner" is a regular column that he contributes to every issue of CTR.

NFLCP: The Way It Was

By Susan Bednarczyk

**"First they see you as a sloe-eyed vamp,
Then someone's mother, then you're 'camp,'
Then you career from career to career.
Lord knows at least I was there,
Now I'm here
I'm still here
I'm still here."**

Carol Burnett belts out these last lines to "I'm Here" in the recent PBS special broadcast of Sondheim's *"Follies in Concert,"* which is about a reunion of former Zigfield Follies showgirls.

Seeing it as I was preparing this 15-year retrospective on NFLCP and community television, made me think of all those veterans in our own field (you'll find many of their names in the upcoming pages), who have weathered just as many ups and downs, identity switches, career metamorphoses, and quantum leaps of (hard-knock) wisdom, but who would be just as ready to stand up at our own reunion, still looking good, and belt out the same Sondheim refrain with matching amounts of self-assured satisfaction.

Like Sondheim's heroine, I've decided to unreel a litany of fragments from the past, not for nostalgia's sake, but to provide some perspective for the young and old among us.

For the older timers: I hope you will find some pride and satisfaction in the maturing of NFLCP and the access movement after years of long struggle and personal sacrifice. Look back to the year when you began working in access (or to the last year you spent 25 percent of your personal income to support NFLCP projects and/or to travel to NFLCP meetings) and compare it to the unbelievable statistics listed in 1985.

For the newcomers: I hope you will understand where these million-dollar post-franchise access investments come from. Each year, since our access history began, there's been some new threat . . . some event we all thought was the end of the line. But we're still here and access is here, too. If you want to get a feel of the energy it took to get it this far, have a look at the NFLCP accomplishments between 1976 and 1980. During those years, NFLCP was an all-volunteer, cooperative effort that's right, no paid staff running on adrenelin.

I should stress that this retrospective was conceived more as a "history of NFLCP" than as a "history of access." There are far too many names and places missing to be a complete history of community television. I would welcome letters from all of you

about dates and people that should be inserted the next time around.

As it stands, chronology is based heavily on the Alternate Media Center's (AMC) historic "A Story About People," events reported in *CTR* and *NFLCP Newsletter* since 1976, and my own recollections from my tenure at AMC between 1973 and 1978. Most of the quotes throughout are from our own publications—a body of work of which we should be proud (thanks, past editors!) and a fitting source for the 10th anniversary of NFLCP publications.

Now, in case I've lost some of you in references to high-brow PBS programming, esoteric Broadway trivia, NFLCP patriotism, and boring credits, I'll move directly toward the entertainment portion of the program. Back by popular demand (it is a fitting introduction to those early years of access), we're going to roll the opening scenes of "Access Wars" (an excerpt from an article I wrote for *CTR* in 1980):

"In cable systems long ago and far away (small pockets of activity in the early '70s), a rag-tag fleet of access centers in the face of insurmountable odds, searched for a place in the communications industry galaxy where locally made, community-responsive programming could flourish. They set up base camps on the (once) protected access channels and fortified themselves with the aid of municipalities and local institutions. Technical facilities were pieced together with worn-out or low-cost equipment abandoned by the Cable Empire in its retreat from commercial local origination strategies during the last recession.

Joined by rebellious program directors on the fringes of the Empire, a loose Federation was formed to address local communications needs both from within and outside the cable industry. Bound together by a Force—a belief in demystification of television and strict adherence to localism—these Blue Skywalkers worked to bring about a New Age of the Active Television Viewer/Participant. The high ideals and commitment of this fleet inspired others to join the Quest for an Alternative to Broadcasting-Style Television."

BEFORE THE 1970^S

Psychedelia...
Minis and minis...
Martin Luther King...
The moon walk...
Woodstock...
Earth Day...
Vietnam...
"Future Shock"

Influences On The Advent of Access

■ Cable TV evolved from Community Antenna Television (CATV)—a 12 channel service for hillside communities that shared an antenna to bring in clearer network reception. It is believed that one of the earliest cable systems was set up by an enterprising TV dealer in the late 1940s or early 1950s as a ploy to encourage set sales.

■ Local origination on cable television started in the early 1950s.

■ In 1968, Sony's portapak was introduced—a hand-held, black and white video camera and shoulder carried recorder. Weighing in at approximately 20 pounds, its usage predated jogging, aerobics, and nautilus training.

■ Video access was an outgrowth of the free speech movement, the civil rights movement, the peace movement, the environmental movement, and other counter-cultural forces that shook the establishment in the 1960s.

■ Bob Devine and Steve Christianson started the Community Media Department (it became part of the Communications Study Center) at Antioch College in 1969.

■ The Challenge For Change Program at the National Film

Board of Canada, examined participatory use of film and video for social change. Challenge for Change provided the foundation for the establishment of the Alternate Media Center (AMC) at New York University.

Industry Trends

■ In 1965, cable television served only about 3 percent of all U.S. homes, or about 1.57 million subscribers. Most cable systems offered only 12 channels.

■ In 1969, Telecable Videotron Ltd. of Montreal (one of Canada's largest MSOs) collaborated with the Canadian Film Board to experiment with Selecto-TV—a system by which subscribers could call in to vote for a particular show they would like shown. The tape listings were on one channel and the vote tallies were on the other.

CHALLENGE FOR CHANGE

As we developed it at the Film Board, Challenge For Change was a social contract between the people who were in charge of a government program—an agency or a social service—and the people who were the recipients of

that program or service, designed to find out how they felt about what was being done and what they would like to see changed. Out of our work social theorists later tried to develop an approach and mechanism that would be applied to a vast array of social conflict situations. But in my experience it is limited to places where the people who are in power are willing to listen and respond. You see, when I go to somebody with my camera and microphone and I say, "Look, give me your soul," I've got to be able to say, "Look, it's going to help you, not hurt you." If you tell me what you think, it is my obligation as the intermediary to go to the authorities, get them to look at it, and respond. If I can't persuade either party to live up to their part of the contract, it won't work.

Now the advantage we had at the Film Board is that we worked through a highly respected government agency, cooperating with eight leading government departments, so we could pretty well guarantee some kind of response. People have misunderstood the Challenge for Change approach because they don't understand that a response is part of the bargain. I have not found this technique working very well in the U.S. There are not many countries in the world where one can make such a bargain, so the concept is not as transportable as people seem to think.



Rene Tremblay of Telecable Videotron in Montreal takes calls and programs six request channels from a library of over 5,000 video documents.

In some units we trained using film, but mostly it was videotape. I think one of the more successful video projects was in Drumheller, Alberta in 1969. In each case there was a community organizer who was the catalyst, and in Drumheller it was Tony Karsh, an excellent fellow who used videotape himself and trained other people to use videotape. About 1904, coal was discovered in the Drumheller area located about 80 to 90 miles northeast of Calgary. By the 1940s there were 40 some mines, and a booming economy. By 1969 only one mine was left, and it was about to close. In the moldering little mining camps around Drumheller lived a lot of old people and single mothers with lots of kids. There were also a lot of economic, social, and health problems. For example, people were moving their privies all around and the Red Deer River was getting terribly polluted. Yet the government wasn't going to give money for a sewer system to people who hadn't given any indication that they were likely to pull together to help build it. Challenge for Change was called in there by the mayor because he wanted to get people stirred up. So, Tony came and started going from house to house with the video equipment, recording oral history and getting to know people. There were groups of immigrants who had come over since 1904 from all parts of Europe. All had had the same kind of experience, but they had kept to themselves and they didn't know each other very well. Tony would make a tape of one person and show it to the next person.

... Later Tony invited them to meetings to see the tapes and discuss their problems. Tony was such a good teacher because when he came into the room with the equipment he looked like he needed help. He would act like he had six thumbs, and before long people would just take the equipment away from him and say, "Tony, let me show you how it works." Before long he developed really skilled crews. Anyway, he got the people to

realize that they had to organize to make successful presentations to the provincial government. They had to show that they were going to be responsible in order to get to the government. And they did get somewhere.

George Stoney in an interview with Marita Sturken from Afterimage, January 1983.

LOCAL ORIGATION

Origination was a common term in Television-Land in the 1950s and 1960s (both here and in England) for the production of television programs. The term originate means to create, to do yourself, to bring into being. "Local origination" seems redundant: to do something yourself locally. The term, however, was adopted by commercial and educational TV stations in the fifties to explain their activity of producing TV programs themselves. Later it appears to have almost completely disappeared except in England, where origination still today is synonymous with TV production; and in cable television, where local origination refers to a cable TV system producing and sponsoring its own television programs.

Local origination is almost as old as cable TV itself. Several cable operators have claimed

they were doing "L.O." in the 1950s. One Montana operator told me that his 500-subscriber cable TV system in the early 1950s had a huge TV camera that they would dolly out in front of their business office every year and cover the 4th of July parade live, as well as cover other downtown activities. Apparently this same camera generally was used to shoot index cards which revolved with an electric motor, displaying community events and local ads.

Another cable pioneer, Buford Saville, started L.O. in 1953. He operated a three channel system in Cumberland, Maryland, and needed programs for his third channel—so he did them himself. He bought a couple of black and white cameras, a simple switcher, lights, and microphones, and began producing live children's programs. It was a selling point to have parents able to watch their children in talent shows, talking with a clown, and responding in any way to the camera. Saville started a news program, then a sports talk show, and finally, he purchased a projector so that 16 mm films could be shown. Since remote and tape productions were not possible, all Cumberland programs were live for many years. Today, over thirty years later, L.O. programming is still alive and well in Cumberland, although a year ago Buford sold his cable TV system to Tele-Communications, Inc. (TCI).

By the late 1960s there were at least thirty cable TV systems

originating their own programs. There might have been more, but there were several limitations. Equipment was a major problem. Videotape recorders only became available in the late fifties, and these were very expensive (upwards of \$100,000). In the mid-1960s lower cost video formats, chiefly from Ampex, GE, and RCA, were available, but they were crude, problematic, and still relatively expensive (\$15-20,000 for a VTR). Black and white cameras were bulky, typically had turret lens, and again, were expensive. It wasn't until the Sony one-half inch portapaks came into the U.S. market, in 1968, that most cable TV companies afford TV equipment. At this time most cable systems were rural. There were only about fifty systems with more than 10,000 subscribers at the end of the 1960s, and cable rates were typically \$5 per month.

Brian Owens, CTR, Vol. 7 No. 4 1984.

1971

Chinese ping pong...
Mai Lai...
Weather Underground...
May Day...
Day care...
Pentagon Papers...
"The Exorcist"

In New York City

■ Public access was inaugurated in Manhattan for 80,000 subscribers. Teleprompter had the franchise for upper Manhattan and Sterling Manhattan Cable had the franchise in lower Manhattan. Sterling charged access users \$10 for using the one-half inch playback deck; Teleprompter provided

community producers access to one camera, a director, a playback deck, and a studio, free of charge.

■ Alternate Media Center was established at New York University in April with a \$275,000 grant from the John and Mary R. Markle Foundation. The purpose of AMC was to conduct experiments in community access to cable television.

■ Open Channel, under the direction of Thea Skover, received \$19,000 from the Markle Foundation and \$15,000 from the Stern Fund to provide tape facilities and personnel for organizations wanting to put programs on public access channels.

■ Open Channel and AMC assisted community groups, produced tapes, and informed people of the availability of access channels. For example, AMC cablecast a two hour documentary of a New York neighborhood protest over the need for a traffic light. The program included coverage of the protest, the arrival of the police and the discussion with police officials.

■ By October, 20 hours of access programming was being cablecast each week.

■ According to Thea Skover, "Our biggest problem lies in informing the public that they can go on television and say whatever was on their minds. . . . People are used to thinking of TV as something someone else does, not as something they do." Red Burns stressed that "we have to learn how to use the equipment, to stretch its potential to the limits, and to discover the kinds of things that haven't been done before."

■ Red Burns and George Stoney were quoted in the *New York Times*: "The kind of programming sent out on cable television for the next 20 years will be determined. . . in the next two or three years." Their concern was that if people did



Virginia Stikeman of Challenge For Change during an all-night edit of a tape about the Canadian National Conference of Social Work.

not use the channels and time available for community programs, the channels would be used for canned shows and "low grade" public service offerings.

Elsewhere In The U.S.

■ AMC went to work in Cape May, NJ and Charleston, WV to teach citizens how to cover local issues and distribute programs via cable.

■ The FCC approved a merger between Teleprompter and American Cablevision, making Teleprompter the nation's largest multiple system operator (MSO). As a quid pro quo for approval of this merger, Teleprompter was required to develop local origination on many of its systems.

■ FCC Chairman Dean Burch told local communities that access will be regulated by the FCC. He said, operators will not be permitted to "censor or exercise program content control of any kind" except to prevent obscenity or advertising.

■ An article published by the *New York Times* in October about public access in New York was reprinted in the *Denver Post* and read by Monroe Rifkin, president of American Television and Communications Corporation (ATC). As a result, Rifkin sent a memo to east coast marketing vice president Jack Gault, encouraging Gault to contact AMC and "find out if there is some manner in which we might work together."

■ Red Burns and Phyllis Johnson of AMC visited the ATC system in Reading, PA after agreeing to work with ATC to establish a community access project there. ATC had indicated that it was "trying hard to be one of the leading innovators in providing local origination...as well as access."

■ Under a grant from the New York State Council On The

Arts, the Port Washington Public Library on Long Island, began a video project to train citizens and increase awareness of local issues.

■ Community video centers began springing up all across the United States.

ALTERNATE MEDIA CENTER PROGRAMMING

Our first programming was about Washington Heights in the Teleprompter area because that's where the concentration of cable subscribers were located. We wanted to see if people would respond to a different kind of television, so instead of trying to make our stuff look like conventional programming, we just had video crews go up there and say, "Hey man, what's happening?" and record their response. It was all very laid back. Phyllis Chinlin and Joel Gold were very active AMC staffers at that time. They did a whole series of tapes about people protesting to get a stop light. We put the unedited tapes directly on cable as well as having community playbacks.

There was a fascinating tape called *Blacks Respond to the Riots*, sparked by an item in the *New York Times* about blacks and Hispanics having a fight at 155th St. the night before. Joel went up there by himself and stopped somebody on the street and said, "Hey man, what's happening?" One man starts talking, telling what he knows, and people gather around. The next person takes the microphone and the next. Then a wonderful crazy guy starts spinning a big tale and everybody else corrects him. Finally, a young guy from the Catholic school nearby tells them what really happened. When the tape is through you have a feeling, not that you have learned exactly what happened the night before, but that you have learned so much about the dynamics of this neighborhood, that you know it's a neighborhood worth

keeping. I think the tape ran as two unedited half hours and we repeated it every day for a week. We found that people often watched it two or three times.

George Stoney in a interview with Marita Sturken, Afterimage 1983.

GRASS-ROOTS VIDEO

Grass-Roots started innocently enough. One person, one Sony PortaPak, and one idea. The idea: to see if this exciting electronic tool could be used for the good of the community. Originally the plan was to shoot community events and play it back in bars where people congregate. But Peggy said, "Why not ask the cable company for a channel?" Eleanor said: "I'd like to help!" I asked the owner of a large commercial TV station if he though one could create a TV station using half-inch video. "Impossible!" he said. That's all it took. Grass-Roots was born. And luckily none of us had had any previous television experience.

We incorporated. We were given channel 12 by the local cable company. We raised enough money for a modulator. An electronic engineer appeared out of nowhere and worked it out so we could originate from his trailer. That was in 1971. Three volunteers, no capital, little equipment, and a hair-brained idea. And were still here.

John Smith, NFLCP Newsletter, June/July 1977.

RALPH LEE SMITH MEETS ACCESS

My first contact with the access movement was just about ten years ago. I was a research assistant on the Sloan Commission for Cable Communications, a very

commendable effort that started too early, gave its report and then went out of business just about the time it was needed.

As I was busy doing my research and minding my own business one afternoon there at the Sloan Commission, several people walked in who looked like they had just come off a protest line of some kind, carrying these little cameras. They said, "May we talk to you?" I said, "Well, if you think it's worth it, I've got plenty of time."

I had an opinion of them. First of all, I knew who they were; they were access people. At the Sloan Commission we had to listen to everybody. But my opinions on this matter were fairly well formed, and they were, I should say, quite traditional. Those people with the cameras were something new that had not penetrated very much into the consciousness even of people who were doing research in the new communications technologies. But I sat down with those people through the afternoon, and it was an afternoon I never will forget. When I walked out of that room, something had happened that could never be reversed. It was about a three hour session, and what they told me is still very relevant to what we're trying to do and it never can be achieved or solved.

As I look back on that day, those people were involved in a very sharp conflict, because if anybody was part of the counter-culture, they were. *Radical Software* was the first publication that came out in the field. Well, they were part of that. They were involved in a conflict with people they had a natural affinity with, the counter-culture of that time. The conflict was that they adopt the technology instead of turning their back on it. It may be hard from ten years' perspective to realize how hard it was for them to do that, to break with the people that they really understood.

I've come to realize subsequently that those people were four or five years ahead of their time in that they were applying not just technology but appropriate technology. That is to say

(before this became a buzzword), they were adopting enough of the technology, at a level of expression which was just adequate to do the job and no more, to achieve what they wanted to achieve. It seems to me that they were way ahead of their time... immensely insightful.

They explained to me that this new television that they were going to create, and were busy creating, was, as they said, a voice for the voiceless. And those words are so much worth remembering.

In our pinnacle of success, whether we're going uphill, downhill, or sideways at this point, we have to ask ourselves just how successful we've been. I would say that we have achieved some success, but reaching the voiceless always has to be a purpose of this movement and a purpose of the people who are in it.

Ralph Lee Smith, NFLCP National Convention, 1981.

1972

Nixon in China...
Munich Olympics...
"Jonathan Livingston Seagull"...
Burt Reynolds...
pandas from China...
the Vesco affair...
Watergate

Industry Wide Developments

■ Cable regulation fever was fueled by the broadcast and movie theater lobbies. As a result, the FCC adopted comprehensive regulations on cable TV. Through the efforts of FCC Commissioner Nick Johnson, all cable systems in the top 100 markets were required to dedicate four channels to access

(public, educational, governmental, and leased); local origination continued to be a requirement.

■ The cable industry had 7.3 million subscribers (7 percent of all U.S. households).

■ Older systems were built in places where people needed cable to bring in adequate broadcast television reception. These systems were known as "cash cows" within the cable industry, because they often had 80 to 95 percent penetration.

■ Multiple system operators began to construct systems in areas where the reception of one or two broadcast signals could be picked up on a home antenna; local origination channels, local bulletin boards, weather, and importation of distant signals were featured on systems with larger channel capacity.

■ Ralph Lee Smith put the finishing touches on "The Wired Nation," a book that launched a thousand thoughts about the future implications of cable.

Antioch College

■ Antioch College students were part of the video team that covered the democratic and republican national conventions on one-half inch video. They operated under the rubric of Top Value Television (TVTV).

■ Students from Antioch also participated as videographers in one of the first major cable policy conferences sponsored by the Rand Corporation.

■ Bob Devine's Communications Study Center at Antioch College emphasized community television and radio. CSC will train and inspire many who go to work in local cable programming, including: Tricia Dair, Howard Horton, Irwin Hipsman, Adam Haas, Linda Di-

Rocco, David Keyes, Diana LeHoven, Rock Newberger, Bob Fishbone, Sarah Linquist, Steven Christianson, Larry Wiener, Ellen Mishkin, Bonnie Taylor, Wendy Blair, Jimmie Francis, Ian Valentine, Chris Dennison, John Jenkins, Bryan Mong, Michael Strong, Deb Bassett, Jane Anton, and Rick Rey.

In Manhattan

■ Cable subscriptions were available for \$6 per month; the Upper East Side was wired, though less affluent parts of the city waited; the New York Housing Authority actively opposed the wiring of 170,000-resident public housing projects.

■ Sterling Manhattan Cable TV invested \$10,000 in equipment (Sony Videorec II cameras and Porta-Pak decks) for access program production by producers trained by AMC.

■ In July, Teleprompter opened the first video access storefront studio at 60 W. 125th Street in Harlem; in August, AMC opened a storefront at 528 La Guardia Place, coordinated by George Stoney and Maxi Cohen.

■ Open Channel enlisted the services of over 80 professional directors, cameramen, editors, and soundmen to serve as volunteer production teams for organizations ranging from community groups such as the Boy Scouts to the Museum of Modern Art.

■ Global Village, under the guidance of founder John Reilly, became another leading supplier of documentaries to public access channels C and D.

■ Raindance Corporation, headed by Michael Schamberg (author of "Guerilla TV") and Ira Schneider, drew upon its "social change" video experience in order to experiment with less structured interview tapes for cable. For example

one tape portrayed a girl on St. Mark's Place talking about drug experiences, a second tape depicted three elderly Upper West Side residents, comparing contemporary city life with the city that they knew in their youth.

■ Other access users included the NYU Deafness Research and Training Center (sign language tapes on issues pertinent to deaf people), Irish Rebel Theater (agitprop pieces and folk music), and Gay Activists Alliance (demonstration coverage).

■ The trend was toward decentralized production, and approximately 200 hours of tapes were cablecast weekly on Manhattan channels C and D.

■ The technical problems of cablecasting half-inch videotape plagued producers who were successful in convincing Sterling's engineers to improve the situation, but who continued to criticize Teleprompter's transmission as "atrocious."

■ Publicity for access tapes presented a problem—Sterling alerted subscribers to the existence of channels via a notice in its mailed program guide, but no shows were listed. Teleprompter offered no listings or announcements of access shows.

■ In July, 20 neighborhood viewing centers and cultural events were coordinated to celebrate one year of public access programming on cable. Programs were cablecast from noon until midnight. They contributed to Downtown Community Video Center, which was located in an area of town that was not wired, began the event with a news segment that was interrupted with the following announcement: "The people of Lower East Side have nothing to celebrate... for the next 20 minutes you will be watching what the people of the Lower East Side have in the way of cable TV: nothing." Fade to black for 20 minutes.

In Reading, PA

■ ATC donated \$6,000 in equipment, office space, and telephones to the video access experiment to be conducted by AMC in Reading, PA.

■ Coordinator Phyllis Johnson moved to Reading, placed an ad in the paper and 20 people responded.

■ Production workshops began and the group agreed to produce one hour of original programming per week under the title "Video Tapestry."

■ Within the first 12 weeks, 14 tapes were cablecast.

■ About 60 people received video training from Phyllis. Joe Masciotti was among those first trained and later that year he was hired as the full-time public access coordinator of Berks-Surburban. Masciotti became the system manager in 1976.

■ The National Cable Television Association presented its award for public relations to Berks Cable in Reading for its video access plan.

Elsewhere In The U.S.

■ Ted Carpenter's Broadside Video, a video access center in Johnson City, TN specialized in the documentation of the issues, lifestyles, and traditions in Appalachia. The group began showing tapes in their community, with some distribution via cable in a few nearby towns.

■ Mediabus, a group of New York videomakers led by Nancy Cain, began programming their pirate station in Lainesville, NY, a small town in the Catskill Mountains. Lainesville TV was born when the group hooked up its own transmitter and began illegally broadcasting tapes made by Mediabus and other members of the community.

■ The New Orleans Video Access Center was formed by four VISTA volunteers. NOVAC borrowed a portable rig, a studio camera, and a Concord monitor, with the intention of providing access to the poor and minorities. The volunteer staff could barely survive on the \$25 or \$50 donations, membership fees, and training dues.

■ Portable Channel was formed as a community/documentary video center in Rochester, NY. The services included equipment access, programming for broadcast and cable, and closed-circuit viewing. The purpose of the organization was to provide education and program models for users of the portable video equipment. Portable Channels was one of the first small format video centers to have an ongoing relationship with a PBS affiliate (WXXI-TV in Rochester).

■ After the FCC's adoption of its cable rules, several University of Texas students asked the local operator to make channel space available for access. Austin Community Television was formed and began cablecasting. It took extraordinary dedication to keep access going in these early days, because volunteers had to drive 12 miles out of town to the headend, and cablecast from borrowed playback decks perched on the car hood. This brought new meaning to the term "remote production," as car headlights were known to have been used for illumination of live cablecasts done from the site.

1972 VIEWS ON ACCESS

"...We don't have enough money, and I don't think any foundation would have enough money, to give everybody video equipment. We have evolved a way of working in which we attempt to set up projects which can be self-generating. We will go into a community with resources, expertise and advice;

ultimately, the project has to be taken over by the community... Our concept is based on the fact that there are community resources available, but that the resources will not be made available until the communities get into the idea of the use of the equipment....

"So, initially we're trying to find ways to provide money, whether it's through cable companies that may make a contribution, or community planning boards, community colleges, or neighborhood groups...."

—Red Burns
Executive Director
Alternate Media Center, 1972

"The viewing public is used to the slick, polished stuff they're being fed on commercial TV, so we've got to give them those same professional standards on the access channels. Otherwise—they'll just regard public access as a lot of playing around with television by a bunch of freaks. The worst thing that could happen to public access would be for it to fall into the hands of the counterculture and the media freaks."

—Thea Sklover
Executive Director
Open Channel, 1972

"If I had a foundation, I would give money to people who produce programming. I would stop funding organizations that make information on the public access channels available. I think that was started because it was felt that the CATV people would try to cut out as much [of the public access programming] as possible. I don't think that has happened. I think the CATV companies have upheld their obligation. They're doing a pretty damned good job with the public access channels. They could have fought public access very, very hard."

—John Sanfratello
Program Manager
Sterling Manhattan CATV,
1972

"Video mediation means taping one side in a conflict and showing it to the other, then taping their response and showing it to the first group. People's Video Theater first did this in Washington Square Park in New York. The park has been under reconstruction for over a year and a tense situation had developed between park police and local residents.

"PVT first made a 50-minute documentary of the situation in the park by talking to everyone who used it: blacks, students, pensioners, etc.... PVT then made a six-minute tape of the park police talking about the documentary, and a six-minute tape of local residents responding to that feedback. The resulting 12-minute tape was shown to city officials, local residents, and city planners. They responded to the questions posed and the final tape, documentary with feedback, was then shown in the park."

—Michael Shamberg, author of
"Guerilla Television and founder of Raindance, in a 1972 interview in *Broadcasting*

"Some of the most varied and creative programming has been done in considerable amounts by the so-called "underground" video groups in New York: Global Village, People Video Theater, Raindance, Space Videoarts, Videofreez. Their commitment to and development of half-inch videotape as an alternative to our mass communications system pre-dates public access by several years and has been of the greatest significance to its development. All of them have received funding from the New York State Council on the Arts, but, since the noncommercial use of half-inch video is for the most part nonremunerative, most of the people involved live and work on a shoestring... their accumulated body of work is impressive....

"There's one very encouraging aspect to the public access financial picture: Much has been accomplished on relatively little. But, it is clear that, if our com-

munities are to have a chance to experience public access, even as an experiment, a substantial commitment of money and people is needed, probably from philanthropic, commercial and government sources."

—Ann Arlen, writing for
Foundation News. 1972

"The content can be miserable. The technical quality is often atrocious. And, as established television executives insistently note, nobody is watching anyway."

"Yet the experiments with public access on cable television continue to be among the more significant in contemporary communications. On specific channels set aside by a cable company, groups or individuals are afforded, without charge, an opportunity to present themselves directly, undiluted by the direction or inhibitions of media professionals. The only restrictions on content at present relate to laws on libel and profanity."

"There is still no national policy on public access and cable companies, and official operations are still rare..."

"For the critic, public access presents a problem. Still highly experimental, content cannot be evaluated in traditional terms. Even technical quality often has less to do with the nature of the half-inch videotape that dominates the form than with the transmitting signal provided by the cable company..."

"The over-all concept, however, carries in its highly decentralized structure staggering ramifications for the electronic media and, at least for the present, the critic a focus on structural variations within that concept..."

"Eventually, it seems, television's monologue may have to make room for cable-vision's dialogue."

—John J. O'Connor
New York Times, June 6, 1972

CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAMMING ON ACCESS

Gaining access to the airwaves doesn't mean a do-it-yourself telecaster will win any new followers.... "When you're dealing with people who aren't sophisticated manipulators of the medium, the truth comes out," says Joseph Mascotti, until recently the public-access coordinator in Reading, where the city's Jewish community raised a considerable outcry after the Ku Klux Klan documentary.

To prevent similar problems from occurring in the future, Mr. Mascotti says Reading, like several other cities, is discussing the establishment of a community advisory board to set standards for access channels. But that gets into very treacherous ground: The FCC's rules explicitly forbid the cablecaster from exercising control over program content. Without that rule, it's argued, public access would be meaningless.

But the FCC also says the cablecaster must comply with operating rules that exclude advertising, obscenity and indecent material. The Cable Television Information Center in Washington says this is "totally contradictory. You can't enforce it unless you can pre-screen access programs and have the right to reject them." In New York, TelePrompter's access channel recently aired several "provocative" tapes that many viewers considered blatantly obscene. TelePrompter says that, at its suggestion, the producer has toned down his latest works. If he hadn't, neither TelePrompter nor anyone else seems entirely certain what could have been done about it.

Michael J. Connor, *Wall Street Journal*, 1972.

1973

Skylab...
POWs...
Yoga...
18½ minute gap...
"The Joy of Sex"...
Haldeman, Erlichman,
and Dean

The Year's Highlights

■ Alternate Media Center branched out to other parts of the U.S. Under contracts with cable MSOs like ATC and Warner, staff members Bobby Mariano (now at CBS) and Eileen Connell (currently NYC's Queens cable VP) were exported to begin public access workshops in Bakersfield, CA, Orlando, FL and De Kalb, IL.

■ New York City access programs included "Real Estate with Rosemarie," "Ebony Moonbean" (a jazz variety show), and "Yoga for the Mind"; De Kalb offered "The Masked Magician" (teenage producer performing for kids).

■ Controversy erupted in Reading when the Klu Klux Klan cablecast a program on the access channel. The local Human Relations Council presented a cablecast intended to fight racial discrimination and the access channel became a forum for community feelings in the aftermath of the Klan program.

■ The Columbus (Indiana) Video Action Center (VAC) was formed with a grant from the Cummins Engine Company via the Irwin-Sweeny-Miller Foundation. VAC leased its cable channel for \$1 per year, and operated rent free, out of the rear of an abandoned funeral parlor.

■ In northern California (another major hotbed of independent documentary/arts videomaking), Marin Community Video (MCV) volunteers presented their first cablecast on the Televue system. Founded to produce and disseminate education and community information via cable, MCV conducted video training workshops, coordinated scheduling and playback, and handled publicity for cablecasts on Televue.

■ George Stoney suggested creating a program at Alternate Media Center in which videomakers would be placed at cablesystems throughout the country to cultivate community television. The idea was modeled after a program initiated by Ricky Leacock at the National Endowment For The Arts (NEA). NEA approved Stoney's idea and funded the program. I was hired, along with Bob Pinto to solicit applicants.

■ Brian Owens from the National Cable Television Association and Ted Conant selected nine videomakers for the AMC Cable Apprenticeship Program. The salaries of "the interns" were paid jointly by AMC and their cablesystem sponsors.

■ Videotron, the cable operator in Montreal, offered its subscribers Videoteque, a service facilitating individual requests for programming (eventually on six full time channels: children's programming, sports, education, public affairs, and the arts).

GOLDEN AGE OF L.O.

I was in charge of NCTA's "Cablecasting Awards," the forerunner of their ACE awards. In 1974 we had more than nine hundred entries for these awards and had to use five regions for our judging, with the regional winners becoming eligible for the

national awards. It is very similar to the NFLCP's Hometown Festival Award winners because the content of L.O. in the early 1970s was very similar to access.

In fact at times, L.O. was more of an alternative community medium than public access. While public access in the early 1970s depended upon the interests of young people fascinated with the portapak, L.O. in many medium-sized towns and cities was covering virtually every aspect of that community's life. The host of an L.O. show "Are You Listening" in Toledo, Ohio explained the premise of her show this way: "Some people say we have become a nation of strangers. We know more about outer space than we do each other. The people you are about to meet are real people. . . . You may know them as a national problem. We want you to know them as people. . . . shop stewards, policemen, women, freaks, prison guards, welfare mothers, drug addicts, judges, black high school girls, etc. I want to underline the bands of human concern so that the differences in age, sex, color, religion, nationality can be enjoyed rather than feared."

Sports programs on L.O. included high school football and quarter midget races in Terre Haute, chariot racing in Pocatello, Idaho, safe snowmobiling certification lessons in Saulte Ste. Marie, and chess matches and horse shoe pitching in Levittown, Pennsylvania. As the L.O. operation wrote me from Johnstown, Pennsylvania; "We put together our own 'Wide World of Sports' and concentrate only on local sporting activities including, track meets, Cub Scout Pine-wood derby races, ping pong and pogo stick competition."

Local origination was very aggressive in public affairs programming. Vietnam, civil rights, women's liberation, and drugs were major issues, and these were reflected in cable programming. Leuiston Cablevision produced a six-part series, "Voices of War," using teachers from Bowdoin College as participants. Newport Beach's "Women Who

Wait" interviewed wives of POWs. There were many programs concerned with drugs, teenagers, and the generation gap. The heart of public affairs, however, was the coverage of the local political scene. The 1974 survey found that a third of systems with L.O. carried city council meetings, and more than half covered election returns. Typically, reports from the mayor and U.S. Congressmen, candidates debates, bond issues, and city budget reviews were covered on L.O. channels. This may seem ordinary now, but years ago this was not done to please the franchise regulators; it was done to attract audiences. At that time, politics and other controversial subjects could attract larger audiences because immediately following the political activism of the 1960s, there was still a considerable amount of interest in such matters.

Brian Owens, *CTR*, Vol. 7 No. 4, 1984.

I REMEMBER WHEN... MEMORIES OF AUSTIN

How did Austin Community Television begin? I think it began when two students, Frank Rasor and Jim Kosub, walked into my office at the University of Texas and said something about how we should be doing something about local programming on the cable system. There were no bells, no thunderbolts. "It just seemed like a good idea at the time." So ACTV began as a student group, probably because the next people with whom we spoke were students.

We organized a community forum on public access, inviting representatives of local government, the cable company, and community groups to attend. One of the stated goals of the March 5, 1973 forum was "to work toward the organization of a public commission to study

cable, and it's (sic) impact on our community." Basically, we had envisioned a great battle ahead to secure even an hour per week of access time from the cable company. (At that time, the company was owned in part by the Midwest Video Corporation—certainly no friend of local programming.) Anyway, the cable company representative knocked our collective socks off when he announced, in mid-forum, that they would make time available on a channel for access from 7-10 pm and 10:30-midnight Monday-Friday. Good Lord, now we had to move to the next step of procuring equipment! Let the groveling/fundraising begin. . . .

We scheduled several meetings with Austin bankers who were known to support community projects. We, of course, saw ACTV as the ultimate community project, as we could, in turn, assist every community group in the city. I'll never forget the one banker representative who just could not get the hang of access. He said, "Well, what if a person did a program about, um, pigeons?" This was not exactly the common concern regarding access, and so I immediately interpreted his question to be the standard obscenity/objectable material question. So I countered with the standard speech about offensive programming, and how persons could refute a "pigeon" program by producing their own "pigeon" program. But no matter what, he seemed genuinely concerned that someone would actually produce a program about pigeons in Austin. We all have our phobias, I guess. Sometimes I picture this guy still in Austin, fearful of crossing channels 10, 32 or 33 just in case there might be a hard-hitting documentary on, um, pigeons.

Despite the fact that it was getting harder for me to justify "procuring" a portapak from the Radio-TV-Film Dept. where I was low-instructor-on-the-totem-pole, we managed to produce a few programs. One of the first was about a Kiddie Fishing Derby. This time, both the equipment and producer came from

some distance. George Stoney came to town as a guest of the University and brought his portapak with him. George's support for our endeavors, his approach to human television, and of course, his portapak were just what we needed. From that visit on, George was a pillar of support for all of us, and his help and inspiration got me through all of the trying crises that are the hallmark of a new access endeavor. (I was pleased to see that he was a special speaker in Austin at the Southwest Regional NFLCP conference recently. I hope everyone from Austin gave him a rousing ovation.)

ACTV's first cablecasts were in humble surroundings. The cable company would not allow us into the headend building located on top of a "TX mountain," but did install a box with jacks and an AC outlet for us to use just outside the building. Armed with an old Sony 3600, we would ascend Mount Larson via the well-worn ruts that were once a road, open the trunk of my VW bug, set up the deck and my old TV, and access would live. I also remember Frank Rasor, the technical person in the group, using a rubber band on the skew control as the programs were cablecast.

One of the first things we did after the forum was to schedule a technical test of the system using one-half inch equipment. Basically, we wanted to know if cable subscribers could hear or see programs produced on one-half inch equipment. We sent questionnaires to selected subscribers and asked them to view a "program" and tell us whether the picture rolled, bent, or whatever. We gave out some telephone numbers for those who happened upon the test to call. Guess what? Someone called! We were delighted, much like old Watson must have been when summoned by the new-fangled telephone. An Austinite had actually talked back to his TV set.

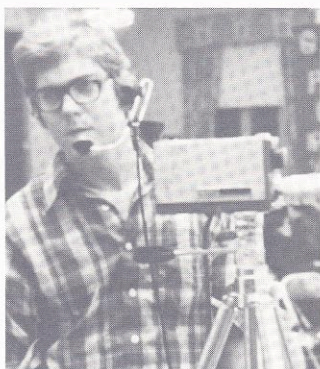
Anita Benda Stech, 1986.

1974

Nixon resigns...
 "All the Presidents Men"...
 Patty Hearst...
 digital watches...
 "Kojak"...
 WIN buttons

AMC Cable TV Apprenticeship Program

■ For the nine interns who were chosen and flown to New York for a series of intensive workshops, Christmas came in mid-January as they opened the box with their brand new portable Panasonic video rigs.



AMC Intern David Hoke tapes a jazz concert in New York.

■ Workshops were held at AMC's Bleeker Street headquarters (above the cinema) three times that year. Between visits to the souvlaki restaurant, Puglia's in Little Italy, Omnibus, home cooked meals at Bob Pinto's Soho loft, and other exotic Manhattan eateries, the group toured video hotspots (The Kitchen, the Downtown Community Video Center, Sterling Manhattan Cable, Technisphere's equipment tweak-up room). They also spoke with an array of experts like John Giancola (who was working with video at Trinity Church), media reformer Everett Parker from

the United Church of Christ, Kathy Kline from the National Endowment For the Arts (the fairy godmother of funding), Tom Zafian (audio tech whiz to the art stars), Bill Etra (of synthesizer fame), Anita Benda (who was at the Minnesota Cable Board)

First Year Accomplishments of Apprenticeship Program

■ In historic Dubuque, Sue Buske began programming with the schools and cultural organizations. This work laid the foundation for the eventual formation of a non-profit access organization.

■ Jeff Ullman (who, when last seen, was a video dating business tycoon in southern California) set up a library-based community channel in Bloomington, IN.

■ Kathy Bogle inaugurated "Health Line" (a format which has been copied on many occasions) on Continental Cablevision's system in Concord, NH.

■ Jean Rice organized video productions workshops with high school students working with senior citizens in Madison, WI.

■ Roger Prois produced a nightly news show in Fort Lee, NJ.

■ Vince Brown covered sports for the new L.O. operation in Stockton, CA (incidentally, Vince made the best shrimp scampi anyone ever ate).

■ Super producer Gary Knowles produced numerous series programs for Complete Channel TV in Madison, WI. He produced "Live On Six," a weekly call-in program (it had the first cable TV/phone/CB hook-in); "Against The Grain," which later became "What's Your Problem"

(hosted by Gene Carey, the cowboy hatted taxi driver, loudmouth, and raconteur).

■ Current municipal access pro Andy Beecher worked with Media Study in Buffalo, NY to develop library, cultural, and local issues videos for cable TV.

■ Phyllis Scalf replaced filmmaker Charis Horton mid-year, and continued the tradition of tapemaking on Appalachian culture, sponsored by Tennessee's Broadside TV.

Elsewhere In The U.S.

■ Local programming began in Vineland, NJ in April. Public Access Productions, a non-profit group formed by Mickey Brandt and four other community members initiated the project on Teleprompter's Channel & (the production facility was located in Teleprompter's garage).

■ The Schenectady Access Cable Council was founded in May to promote and facilitate use of the local access channel.

■ In the fall of 1974, 100 people attended a meeting at Mission Cable in San Diego, CA to discuss organization of community television services. As a

result, the Community Video Center (a non-profit organization) was formed to manage Channel 24.

■ National Cable, a subsidiary of United Cable, began operating a cable-system in East Lansing, MI. There are six dedicated access channels (two for Michigan State University, one for the public library, one for public access, one for the high school, and one for the local government). "Black Notes" is one of the earliest series programs in East Lansing.

■ Experimentation with a two-way system began at the Irvine Unified School District in California. The project was developed under the direction of Superintendent A. Stanley Corey and University of Southern California professor Mitsuro Kataoka. The system connected elementary and high schools, the university, city hall and the library.

■ Students at the University of Minnesota started University Community Video well in advance of cable's entry into the Twin Cities market. At first, the campus cable system was used as an outlet; later KTCA-TV, the local PBS affiliate, became an outlet. When cable came to the Twin Cities, UCV



Sue Bedrarczyk (left) and Ann McIntosh (right) during a meeting at AMC.

provided programming for the access channels in Minneapolis.

■ In January, the first public access show was cablecast in Somerville MA. The program generated a torrent of controversy because of a four letter word on the tape. This was only the beginning of Somerville's rocky road to access.

■ According to NCTA's 1974 survey of local origination, local cable programming was clearly thriving.

■ The FCC dropped its local origination requirement for cable operators.

SURVEY OF L.O.

I conducted two comprehensive local origination surveys when I worked for the National Cable Television Association (NCTA) from 1972 to 1974. The second survey, in early 1974, found 589 cable TV systems in all 50 states (and Guam) doing L.O. They reached about 4.7 million subscribers, or about 65% of all cable TV subscribers at that time. In about 20% of those systems L.O. was produced by a third party: generally a school, college, or public access operation. The other 80% (493)

had L.O. produced by the cable company. Advertising was used by 70% of these L.O. operations. A survey of their programming showed 377 systems producing sports, 370 had public affairs programs, 255 presented news, 171 cablecast children's shows, and 169 purchased syndicated materials. This was the golden age of local origination.

Brian Owens, *CTR*, Vol. 7 No. 4, 1984.

ALLEGED OBSCENITY

In Somerville, MA, the first access cablecast in January 1974 generated a torrent of controversy. The program was a sampler of short cuts of video shot by Media Action kids over the past year. The tape included segments where the camera followed a dog peeing on a hydrant and a SMAP kid getting his haircut before enlisting in the Marines saying "fuck." The aldermen hit the roof. They were led by Alderman Joe Guidi who went to the Boston papers calling the program "rotten, disgraceful and pornographic." "I was outraged," he said. "It's bad enough these words are painted on our buildings—we don't need them in our homes on TV." Guidi called for

the pre-screening of all tapes and vowed to take steps to assure this would never happen again.

SMAP was caught completely off guard and never expected this kind of reaction. They weren't looking for a free speech fight. They wanted to develop access as a community voice. So they publicly apologized, bleeped the word out of the tape and would just have soon forgotten about the whole thing. But Guidi and others weren't prepared to let go. State law had given cable jurisdiction to the mayor, leaving the Aldermen as sideline spectators. And this was an especially attractive political issue. So several months of Cable Board and Aldermanic hearings followed the incident. The final outcome was the Aldermen discovered there really wasn't much they could do about it. It wasn't a question of obscenity and they couldn't expect FCC or state support for prior censorship.

The Cable Board put together some completely voluntary guidelines that almost apologetically suggested that potentially offensive programming be scheduled for later at night and be preceded by a warning. The issue quietly faded away as, incidentally, Guidi did a few years later. He lost much of his credibility when accused of pocketing fees at the golf course where he worked and didn't run for reelection.

Bob Matorin, *CTR*, Vol. 7 No. 1, 1984.

1975

The recession...
deregulation...
"Jaws"...
Apollo-Soyuz link-up...
Squeaky Fromme

Spreading The Word

■ Alternate Media Center (AMC) was handling ten to 15

requests per day for information on public access. The requests came from community activists, videomakers, and educators throughout the U.S. Most information seekers were referred to AMC interns and video access centers out in the field.

■ AMC began preparing a two volume "Public Access Workbook."

■ George Stoney and Red Burns spoke extensively on community control of media. This included speeches at international conferences abroad. They also presented testimony to the FCC when public access issues arose.

■ AMC and New York University's Graduate School of Public Administration received the go-ahead for a grant from the National Science Foundation to experiment with how social service delivery to senior citizens might be accomplished via two-way cable in Reading, PA.

■ The employer of the 1974 interns were given an option: if the intern was brought on staff full time, he/she would be able to keep the video rig for a second year and continue to fly back to New York for workshops and serve as advisors to the 1975 group. Many of the interns stayed on.

■ Bob Pinto and George Stoney went on the road to visit each intern, bolstering support for local programming efforts (meeting CATV managers, city administrators, access board members) like video's Johnny Appleseeds.

■ I kept the Jiffy Bag company in business by sending out endless packages of "model programming" (dubs from the interns in the field). I also tracked monthly reports from the field and distributed them.



Alternate Media Center Staff and Interns. Front row (left to right): Bob Pinto, Vince Brown, Jeff Uhlman, Jean Rice. Second row: George Stoney, Bud Hofstadter, Caris Hoston, Kathy Bogle, Gary Knowles, Andy Beecher, Roger Price, Sue Buske, Unidentified Man.

AMC Intern Programming

■ Anne Prutzman, staff coordinator of San Diego's Community Video Center, produced programs on ethnic culture, women's issues, and other social issues.

■ David Hoke provided video production training for non-profit organizations in York, PA.

■ John Strucel produced programming for the deaf in Santa Rosa, CA.

■ In Vineland, NJ, Mickey Brandt produced social issues programs and call-in programs. One memorable event occurred during a public hearing on the location of a federal prison. Since they were unable to cablecast the proceeding live,

every one-half hour a volunteer transported a tape back to the studio where it was cablecast. Home viewers were given the number of a phone just outside the hearing room where Mickey was receiving calls. He recorded the questions and comments from the viewers at home, went back in the line for using the public mike, and he played the tape for the city fathers.

■ Nancy Bicknell (occasionally referred to as "bionic women" by students) produced cultural programming and coordinated the utilization of a high school located cable studio in Dover, NH. Of all the programs Nancy produced, the favorite for other AMC interns was an interview with acclaimed octogenarian photographer Lottie Jacobi, who gave young media-makers advice on truth and imagemaking.

Starts of The Year

■ Home Box Office revolutionized the cable industry when it began networking its pay programming via satellite.

■ The National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB), the organization that inspired the formation of NFLCP, was formed. NFCB was run out of the home of Tom Thomas and Terry Clifford during its first year.

■ Worcester Cable TV Council (a non-profit organization) was formed to operate Teleprompter's Channel 13 in Worcester, MA. The New Orleans Video Access Center aired a documentary on the Mississippi River Bridge and "Being Poor In New Orleans" over broadcast station WGNO. This marked the first time a black and white one-half inch video-

tape was broadcast in New Orleans.

■ Mid-York Library System in Utica, NY acquired a three-quarter inch production system, obtained an unlimited play series from a public television library, and provided one to five hours a week of local programming to five area cablesystems.

■ Carol Batty, the children's librarian at the Monroe County Public Library (site of the access center in Bloomington, IN) began the long-running series "Kids Alive," based on the creative efforts of eight to 15 year olds.

■ The Altoona Area Public Library in Pennsylvania began its first cable programming effort as a summer pilot project. The project provided about 90 minutes of programming per week.



AMC Intern Nancy Bicknell in Dover, NH.

1976

Jimmy Carter...
CBs...
EST...
Legionnaire's disease...
The Bicentennial...
Entebbe...
skateboarding

More From AMC Interns

■ Gary Knowles began publishing *Vidicon*, a journal for AMC interns, participating cable bosses, access centers, as well as long-time friends like Sue Smoller (Madison, WI) David Korte (East Lansing, MI) Rika Olsen (MIT in Cambridge, MA) and Earl Haydt (Reading, PA).

■ Manuel Gonzalez produced Hispanic cultural shows in Hayward, CA.

■ Mary Jane McGee coordinated access programming from an access center located in a church in Knoxville, TN.

■ Michael Aronson entered the Somerville MA access fracas as an intern with the municipal cable channel. He was able to cool out from the fray each week as the host of his popular radio call-in show at Tufts University.

■ Nancy Jesuale worked with institutions in Johnstown, PA to stimulate the formation of access programming on the local Teleprompter system. As a result, Southern Allegheny Community Television is formed.

Crisis For AMC Interns

■ George Stoney announced that he would take a sabbatical

in Ireland to film his documentary, "Man of Aran."

■ Red Burns became heavily involved with the interactive experiment in Reading, PA. She also began working on other projects that were unrelated to access.

■ AMC interns began to panic. With the FCC considering proposals for deregulating cable (including access rules), the interns worried about what would happen if Red and George were out of town when hearings were held.

■ Red and George suggested that it is time the interns took charge themselves. They told the interns that community programming had institutions behind it and solid community constituencies. Therefore, community programmers were in a much better position than AMC to participate in FCC proceedings, they said.

NFLCP Is Born

■ A void had been created. The AMC intern program was ending and Red Burns and George Stoney had other projects they had to work on. AMC interns began discussing how they might form a new organization to provide the same support services that AMC had provided. They talked about a new organization to sponsor periodic gatherings to discuss access, share programs, and attend workshops. They talked about creating a support network for programming coordinators who were approaching burn-out.

■ The interns formed a steering committee: Sue Miller Buske, David Hoke, Jean Rice, Ann McIntosh, Susan Bednarczyk, Mickey Brandt, Nancy Jesuale, and Michael Aronson. Mickey Brandt and Michael Aronson came up with a name: The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers.

■ The first task was to broaden the base: seek involvement from non-interns interested in a national effort. The steering committee divided the United States into regions and interns were assigned regions to begin organizing.

■ Programmers from the northeast region initially contacted by Ann McIntosh, turned up in Cambridge, gave the NFLCP idea the go ahead, and drafted the first NFLCP philosophy statement.

■ Nancy Jesuale, David Hoke, Mickey Brandt, and I scheduled a time to voice our access concerns before the Federal Communications Commissioners (i.e. Teleprompter's high hourly fee for video playback of access programs in Johnstown, PA). We showed clips of access programming. The commissioners were attentive and it may have influenced the content of favorable rules which were adopted later that year.

FCC Revised Its Access Rules

■ Only one composite access channel was required with activation of four full channels, dependent upon demand and usage.

■ Equipment requirements for access were for live black and white origination capability (at a minimum) with editing/playback facilities.

■ Charges for equipment use were to be "consistent with the goal of affording users a low-cost means of TV access;" playback of tapes by access users must be free.

■ Cable operators were allowed to keep "Obscene and indecent matter" off their systems via bleep-outs and exclusion of repeated violators from the channel for a length of time.

■ Cable operators were re-

quired to post access use rules by July.

DO YOUR VIEWERS A FAVOR...SHOOT A POLITICIAN

Grass-Roots is the community cablecasting station in Aspen, CO. Denver, the state capitol, is 250 miles away and over two snow-covered passes. It was our bet that only one out of a thousand voters in our district had ever been inside the state capitol, much less visited with a state representative at work in the legislative chambers.

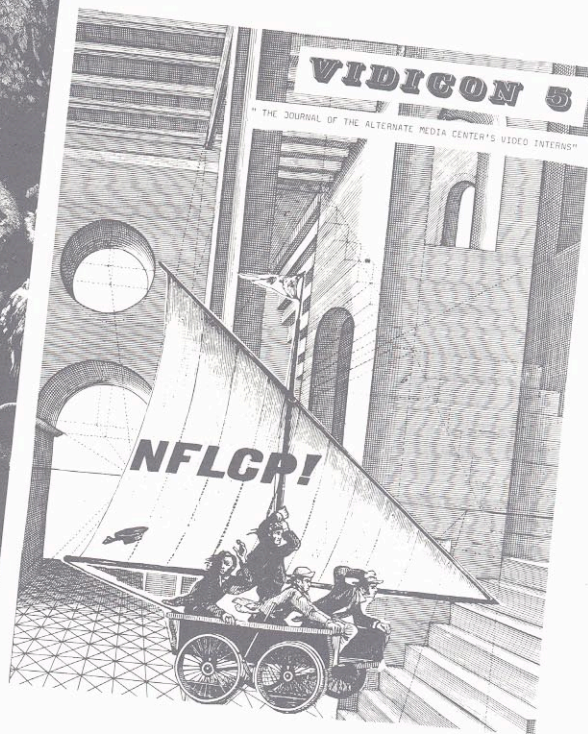
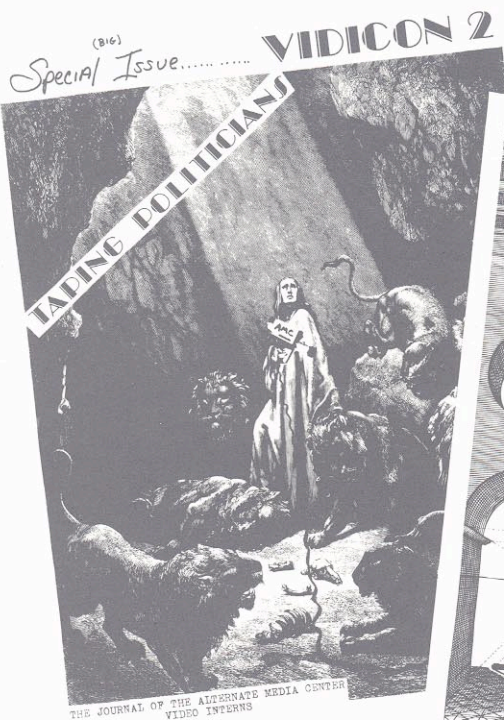
So we decided to do what the other 9,999 voters couldn't do for themselves: go visit our representative and record the action in the marble halls with our video equipment. You can do it too.

Simply call up your state representative and find out when it is convenient for you to cover the action. Ask your representative to send you a list of the conferences, meetings, bills etc. that are typical of legislative work and are scheduled for the days you are to shoot. Request that all press passes and parking arrangements be taken care of for your visit. Then put extra effort into getting your technical shit together, and go for it.

In case you have any doubts about how you will be received in the state house, you should understand one essential fact. In your mind the state legislators are probably the most important people in the capitol building. But in the minds of the legislators, the person with the tv camera is the king-maker—so have confidence.

Here is how Grass-Roots handled the assignment. We did our homework, collected news clippings about the state representative, plus asked local newsmen, political wizards, and members of the League of Women Voters about the issues, so we wouldn't miss any key questions.

We also asked these folks what else we could cover in the capitol that would be valuable to the voters.



Based on these discussions, we had our state representative set up a panel discussion with other legislators about state problems, about friction between eastern and western sections of the state, about energy problems, and water diversion.

We also set up an interview with the chairman of the joint budget committee on allocations of state funds.

We shot video tape for a day and a half. We crawled all over the floor of the state house of representatives, in caucus sessions and committee meetings, down the hallways and through the chambers of the capitol building.

In the evening we relaxed at our representative's apartment, turned on a tape recorder and threw every question we could think of at her. About her life, her work, her stand on the issues, the problems of her district, and the future of the state.

The next day we shot stills and video footage to run over her very frank and informative

answers. (As George Stoney pointed out, state house action is a lot less exciting than a roller derby, so you have to work hard for this footage.)

Returning home we edited the material into a 20-minute portrait of our state representative, plus a 10-minute panel discussion, and a five minute interview with the key financial man in the state.

The entire program was only 35 minutes, but was fairly tightly edited (we shot a total of four hours of audio and video tape.)

The show contained fresh information that the voters really couldn't easily get elsewhere plus a more intimate view of their representative than they could ever gain on their own.

For the four of us who shot the production it was a hell of an education. And for the viewers, they always appreciate it when you take them somewhere they can't easily get to themselves.

I hope your group will try it. If you do, I have only one small suggestion that may save you some anguish. Don't make the mistake that I did; don't go up to

the Sargent-at-Arms and say that you are there to shoot your state representative.

John M. Smith, Vidicon, Vol. 1 No. 2, 1976.

NFLCP APPEARS BEFORE FCC

On November 15, a group of NFLCP people from the mid-Atlantic region appeared before the FCC at its monthly en banc meeting. They introduced the commissioners to the Federation and screened a short video sampler of access programming. David Hoke (York Community Access TV) reports that the Commission seemed genuinely interested in the access movement, its problems, and the number of people involved in making community TV, although they did ask if they were all 'practicing for jobs in broadcasting?'

In a written statement, the NFLCP delegation asked the

FCC to reassert its commitment to access by:

—recognizing that non-operator use of CATV channels is a public right,

—that such programming serves the public interest of the community as well as benefitting the cable operator.

—that a significant amount of access programming is occurring today, and that this indicates a genuine public need for access.

The statement also urged the FCC: to allow municipalities to negotiate their own access requirements, to clarify or eliminate such terms as 'reasonable rate,' and to adhere to the deadlines set for grandfathered systems to provide access channels.

NFLCP—New England Newsletter, 1976.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE OF THE NFLCP

The electronic media occupy a significant place in the lives of the American people. But after 50 years of operation, the current system of broadcasting has yet to allow true public access to this national resource. The public has been kept ignorant of the long-term affects of the media on their values and mores, and of the policy decisions that affect the media. They also lack the access to the tools which would allow them to use media technology for their own community's needs and interests. Perpetuating this media ignorance only leads towards a controlled population; the NFLCP advocates a national access policy as one step in combatting this ignorance.

While a policy of limited access may have made sense in the days of limited spectrum space, the results of new broadband communications technologies makes this policy both undemocratic and obsolete. The NFLCP affirms that citizen access to the electronic media is a BASIC RIGHT under the First Amendment.

1977

NYC blackout . . .
Neutron bombs . . .
Seabrook . . .
Punkers . . .
Water discovered beyond Earth . . .
Gang of Four . . .
"Annie Hall" . . .
Billy Beer . . .
Jogging and fitness . . .
Bert Lance . . .
Mood rings . . .

■ At Goddard College, community media students formed the St. Johnsbury TV Coop in Vermont. They trained community members and local students.

■ "Manhattan At Large," a call-in series moderated by city council members, started the inauguration of municipal access in New York City on Channel L. Manhattan Cable hired New Orleans city planner Chuck Sherwood and community organizer John Sandifer (from Philadelphia) to fun it.

■ Several videomakers presented tapes at an NFLCP meeting in New York City. The following individuals presented their programming: Maurice Jacobson (Derby, CT), Shelly DiChiara (Washington Heights Community Video Center, New York City), Jay April (the Seabrook Video Collective), and Barry McQuilken (Somerville, MA).

Midatlantic

■ Randy Feldman (Community Video Workshop, Livingston, NJ) coordinated NFLCP's Midatlantic Regional Conference, and invited Alex Bennett, the controversial producer of "Midnight Blue."

■ National Science Foundation funding for the interactive experiment in Reading ended. Berks Community Television formed and pulled together funding and staff to keep the two-way system running.

Southeast

■ NFLCP representatives attended the Video South Conference in Johnston City, TN.

■ WRKB radio, the first black-owned cable radio station in the country premiered in Knoxville, TN during the month of April.

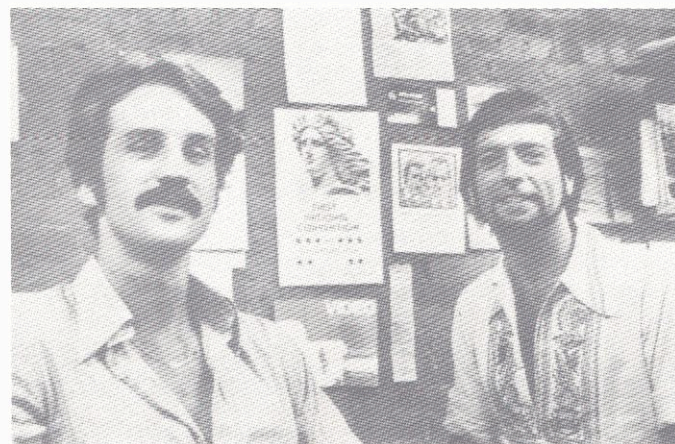
■ Ron Kemp and John Schnur of North Carolina State University succeeded Margaret Gregg of Broadside Video (Johnson City) as NFLCP regional coordinators.

Central States

■ East Lansing' WELM produced 960 programs in 1977, and ran shows for four or five hours each night.

■ Bloomington's Channel 7 trained 141 individuals and produced 387 shows in 1977.

■ Video Action Center in Columbus, IN offered three hours of video request time (from its 500 tape library) and three hours of programming daily; relations with Cox Cable's Columbus Cablevision were uneven.



John Sandifer (left) and Chuck Sherwood (right) of the Channel L Working Group.

■ Ann Arbor, MI hosted its annual access celebration, and cablecast more than 70 hours of access programming.

■ Don Smith of Bloomington, IN served as NFLCP's regional coordinator.

Midwest

■ Dubuque Community Access TV (DCAT) formed in April; Teleprompter offered \$500,000 worth of equipment for production.

■ Programmers from Madison, WI formed the Madison Community Access Center to schedule shows and train the community to use Complete Channel TV's access channel.

■ Programmers from Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois travelled to Dubuque, IA in June to hear Nancy Jesuale (Johnstown, PA) Sue Smoller (Madison, WI), and Scott Spaine (DeKalb, IL) discuss access center development.

■ Sue Miller Buske (Dubuque, IA) was the regional coordinator and the national coordinator for NFLCP membership development.

■ The region met again in Dubuque in December and elected Justin Galler (Iowa City, IA) to the steering committee, Jim Male to a regional post, and Carol Brown Eilber to a regional post. Sharon

Briley from the FCC spoke at the meeting.

Far West

■ Regional coordinator Paul Denn, director of the Community Video Center in San Diego, CA, identified 66 locations in seven western states where there was local programming outlets.

■ Bay Area Community Television Group coordinated action among access centers and video producers in the San Francisco area.

■ Theta Cable in Los Angeles carried one night of variety programming on the access channel each week.

■ Public Access To Cable TV (PACT) in Hayward, CA received \$30,000 in financial support from the city council.

■ Spokane schools began cablecasting on one of five educational channels. They received a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Other Regions

■ Paul Smolen of Austin, TX was the Southwest regional coordinator.

■ Pat Tierney of Grass Roots Video in Aspen, CO became the Mountain States regional coordinator.

Taping With A Purpose

■ The Clamshell Alliance occupied the nuclear power plant in Sea Brook, NH and the event was documented by the Seabrook Video Collective. There were 30 people with ten portapacs involved in the project, including NFLCP members Phyllis Joffe, David Skillicorn, Debbie Dorsey, and Jay April.

■ Videomaker/access coordinator Nancy Jesuale woke up July 20, 1977 only to find herself in the midst of the Johns-

town flood. She documented the damage with her portapak.

Washington, D.C.

■ NFLCP attended the FCC's intergovernment relations conference on cable regulations with city and state officials, industry representatives, and public interest groups.

■ NFLCP's advocacy coordinator David Hoke testified in favor of access before the House Communications Subcommittee in September. Red Burns (AMC) and Earl Haydt (manager of the cablesystem in Reading, PA) and the Cable Television information Center also testified.

■ NFLCP asked the FCC to clarify a Delaware cablesystem's denial of access to a community member. The commission ruled in the favor of the producer.

NFLCP At Year's End

■ NFLCP's first annual report was issued through the work of Susan Bednarczyk, Sue Miller Buske, Sallie Fischer, STAND (Derby CT), and Urban Planning Aid (Boston).

A VIDEOMAKER'S JOURNAL OF THE JOHNSTOWN FLOOD

Tuesday evening, July 19, I returned home from a friend's house. It was near midnight and rain had been falling all evening. The street next to Main Street where I lived was covered with a foot or so of water by then. I remember remarking on it and never thinking it would turn into anything. I went to bed.

I woke up at 4 a.m. because there were strangers in my bedroom and the woman was hysterical. I remember being angry and befuddled, thinking, "how the Hell did they

get in here." Somehow I woke up enough to understand they were saying it was a flood. In the lightning, I could see six or seven feet of water flowing by—cars completely under water—and the sign near the apartment building squeaking eerily on its hinges just above the water level. The people in my room were the tenants from the first floor. Their apartment was already two feet under.

I stayed up then, waiting to see if the water was receding. It was. The power was fading slowly. I turned the radio on but there were no local stations on the air. And Pittsburgh *DIDN'T KNOW!* I kept listening for a report or a warning or any emergency broadcast. There never was one; not for almost two days.

I experienced a feeling of relief—no work tomorrow, and became giddy. As dawn came we watched the water flow down Main Street, carrying all the books from the first floor of the library, furniture, speakers and CB's from the electronics store, clothing, and an army of shoes from the shoe store. It seemed so funny watching all their stuff bobbing away.

Once the water was gone the situation took on its awful proportions. We knew intuitively that 100 people had died that night. The town was covered with about two feet of smelly mud. I wanted to get the portapak. We had to walk out of town and over the mountain to the high ground where luckily one of the members of SACTV had the portapak. Then we saw the damage. It was unbelievable. Cars piled on houses. Whole sheets of pavement gone. Rivers through houses. More than I can describe.

I got the portapak about four in the afternoon on Wednesday. The water was down to about one foot downtown. We began touring the city on foot with the portapak. I cannot express how unbelievable everything was that

I saw. We had to walk through water and over all kinds of debris. Helicopters were landing on buildings, trying to evacuate the hospitals, which had no water or power and evacuating people from homes. We walked right through the middle of it, taping scenes that would give you the chills: a huge crater where there had been a street of houses was filled with crushed cars, pieces of foundation and all of it buried in four feet of mud.

For the rest of that first day we walked downtown until dark.

The second day I wanted to tape in another area of town. Luckily, two friends from higher ground dropped by, and one had a car. It took about two hours to drive to Hornerstown, a neighborhood usually ten minutes away. When we got within one-half mile of the place, we got out and walked until we were in the middle of a place that looked like the end of the Earth. The destruction was so total that it made me think of movie sets—it just didn't look real to me. As we walked with the portapak we talked to several people on the streets. We were much too intimidated by their suffering to interview them. But they clustered around us, eager to tell what happened, horror by horror. One woman told of breaking the glass out of a second floor window and lowering her two children, one, two, and one, six, out by sheets and then jumping herself. Moments later the house crumbled, toppled down and drifted up against a neighbor's house, one block away, cutting off any chance for that family's exit. When the second house crumbled, the people inside couldn't escape. Three children and the father died. The mother remembers being in the water and feeling her son pulled from her. She was found alive in the water several miles away.

We kept taping like robots. It wasn't until a week or so

later that we had any idea what we were taping or a plan for the tape. It was clear that we had to tape daily, that we were recording an event of significance. But the reasons were no clearer than that. I began to worry about my own problems and became depressed. I didn't know why I should put what personal energy I had left into the tapes when everything was breaking down around me.

The next day while I was trying to call my mother in Detroit, my videocamera was stolen from the car.

Quickly the Alternate Media Center at NYU sent another camera and I was back out taping. The two-day rest had allowed me to create a game plan for the type: it would be a documentary from the inside; a message to the outside. We went out shooting with new vigor . . . vigor which would soon turn into gritted teeth.

We learned a dam had broke. We went to Tanneryville, where the dam had been, and once again faced a panorama of unbelievable destruction. It had taken only two or three minutes for the wall of water from the dam to sweep away a whole community. People told of hearing an unearthly roaring from the water, and screaming in the dark all night long. We trudged up to the broken dam. We were afraid to try interviews. Too many people had been killed and we didn't want people to share their grief with us. We just couldn't handle it ourselves.

Finally Allan Gates, my friend and shooting buddy showed up. I was really happy to see him. No trace of him could be found for a week after the flood, and I knew his apartment had been destroyed. I showed him what I had so far, and we made plans to begin shooting together the next day. He had also lost his job and had plenty of free time. Because of the robotron discipline we had managed with our shooting, we had

plenty of "disaster shots," as we were calling them. But we hadn't talked to many people, so we went back out to Tanneryville and Hornerstown to do interviews. In Tanneryville, we were lucky enough to go on calls with the Red Cross volunteers in the field. We found that it did a lot for our interviewing approach to be in the company of a totally professional worker whom the residents trusted. In fact, we didn't have to ask questions. People saw us with Fanny from the Red Cross and spoke freely in front of us because we were with her. Of the several people we talked with that day, the most memorable was Johanna. Johanna walked up to me (I was holding the mic) and began to talk about the flood. Eleven members of her family had been killed. Her grief was apparent as she began to talk of losing her family. I remember feeling panic, trying to get away from the subject, steering her away from specific information, etc. But she wanted to talk about it. I was afraid of her grief. It made me feel unfairly privileged. She plowed on, despite me, with a story of sorrow that is the most animated conversation on the finished tape. It also was one of the most difficult conversations of my life.

At some point we knew we would have to stop shooting and begin editing. The tape is a series of segments which explain different parts of the disaster. There is no narrative and no effort to give a comprehensive overview of what happened. Everything is explained through interviews with the victims and the tape deals mainly with the aftermath.

Making the tape was a fluke, being there at the time with equipment and tape to spare.

The disaster was much more serious than I can explain here. I think though, that the tapes make this clear. We have shown them to friends, people in the Johnstown area, the

editor of the local newspaper and representatives of the PBS outlet here, and we feel good to see the tapes have an effect on people. I can't express how good I feel about having made the tapes. Although this was a situation I never anticipated, it is exciting and rewarding when you get it, and man, if you jiggle the camera, or the mic cuts out, there are no retakes.

Nancy Jesuale, NFLCP Newsletter, Oct./Nov. 1977.

NFLCP'S ORIGINAL STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Prompted by an increasing need to expand public access rights (e.g., Communications Act of 1934, CATV rulings and regulations), the NFLCP was organized in 1976 to help meet the communications needs of people on a local community level.

The goals of the organization are to preserve people's access rights, to improve access conditions, and to achieve active citizen participation in the media. To this end we are committed to contacting and incorporating all those dedicated to these principles on a non-discriminatory basis and to seeking out minority and other special interest groups whose communication needs might otherwise be over-

looked. We are pledged to uphold the inherent right of each citizen to information via all media.

It is our hope to achieve these goals by serving as a center for the collection and dissemination of pertinent information; by engaging in advocacy efforts on local, regional, and national levels; and by providing support to those who seek to make information and media use more accessible to all people.

NFLCP'S STEERING COMMITTEE MEETS

The National Steering Committee strengthened its ties with the NFLCP grassroots base at its July 9-10 meeting, most significantly in the areas of community education and advocacy. About twenty people, ten of them committee members from as far away as California, attended the three-day session at New York University's Alternate Media Center.

Over the past two months, the NFLCP Steering Committee has stepped up its pace to keep time with the demands of new members, new friends, and new opportunities. With one or two membership pledges arriving on the treasurer's desk every day, steering committee members are optimistic about

the future of the growing organization.

Recent regional meetings in Iowa, Indiana, and Connecticut, and the publication of the first *NFLCP Newsletter* have brought about quite a lot of excitement over the Federation's potential. Travelers from far-flung places like Chicago, New Orleans, Hawaii and West Germany have stopped by this office recently to discuss the value of a federation in supporting further projects that use video in libraries, schools and cablecasting. Friends from the American Library Association's Video/Cable Task Force have also spoken with the NFLCP about ways the two organizations can harmonize their efforts. The NFLCP Community Education Task Force is encouraged by these developments and plans to meet soon to organize plans for information exchange.

A summer Washington, D.C. excursion found NFLCP representatives at FCC offices, The National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the House of Representatives, and the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. Many people from these organizations had already read the *NFLCP Newsletter* and commended the NFLCP on its high energy level and commitment to local programming.

Susan Bednarczyk NFLCP Newsletter, Oct./Nov. 1977.



Still photos from Nancy Jesuale's tape on the Johnstown flood.

1978

John Paul III . . .
Begin/Sadat conference
at Camp David . . .
The boat people . . .
"Animal House" . . .
Test tube baby . . .
Proposition 13

NFLCP Forges Ahead

■ After developing local programming in 24 communities and 12 states, the AMC intern program ended. However, all interns made plans for a reunion at NFLCP's first National convention which was held in Madison, WI.

■ The Steering Committee met in January in Derby, CT to evaluate the organization's performance in 1977 and set priorities for 1978.

■ Susan Bednarczyk stepped down from the position of steering committee coordinator. Sue Miller Buske volunteered for the job, and NFLCP was run out of Sue's Dubuque home. NFLCP received two to three letters per day from those seeking information on access and the organization.

■ NFLCP's Sue Buske and John Camelio made a presentation before the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting. They presented a fresh look at the possibilities for access programmers and public TV; other NFLCP appearances were made at the National Association of Educational Broadcasters conference and the National Commission on Cooperative Arrangements.

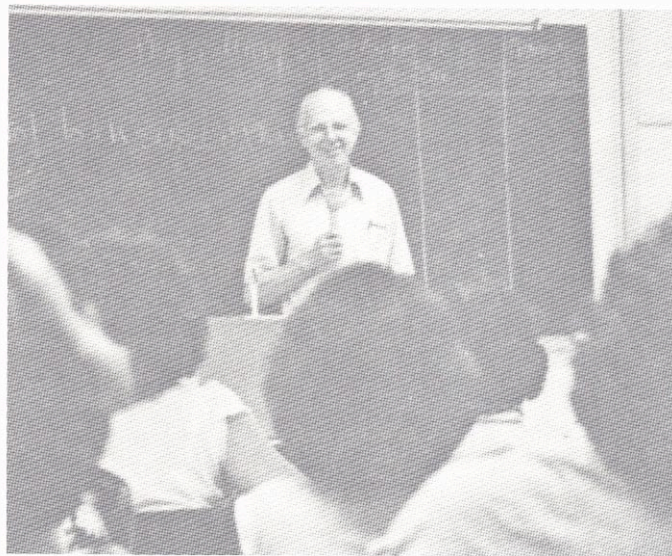
■ NFLCP also participated in its first National Cable Television Association Convention in New Orleans. Sue Buske was a panelist for the only access workshops at the convention.

■ In April, the NFLCP's steering committee held a meeting on the Mississippi River. The committee began planning NFLCP's first national convention. They also worked on the organization's structure, so the steering committee could be replaced by an elected board of directors at the national convention.

■ NFLCP received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for the convention.

Advocacy

■ In February, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit, held that the FCC had no authority to set access requirements. Access advocates shuddered at the possible consequences; the FCC decided to take the case to the Supreme Court; everybody had an opinion.



George Stoney delivers the keynote address at NFLCP's first national convention in Madison.

■ In light of *Midwest Video*, NFLCP suggested that local cable franchises and ordinances ought to be tightened up to protect access.

■ David Hoke presented NFLCP's testimony to the House Subcommittee on Communications. Hoke subsequently turned over advocacy responsibilities to Paige Amidon and Bob Vitale.

NFLCP's First Convention In Madison

■ NFLCP pulled together its first national convention in Madison in July under the leadership of Gary Knowles . . . What a time!

■ Larry Staab from Pittsburgh, PA coordinated the first Hometown USA Video Festival. Eight tapes were offered to video centers on a bicycle tour.

■ NFLCP presented its first award for "Achievement in Humanistic Communications" to George Stoney, access' best loved Founding Father; hereafter the award is named in George's honor.

■ Conference attendees selected NFLCP's first board of directors.

and Screen Actors Guild President Kathleen Nolan.

■ About 70 attendees, lead by Father Barry Verdi of San Jose, drafted a statement opposing Van Deerlin's rewrite of the 1934 Communications Act (H.R. 13015). The group urged federal guarantees for access to cable and broadcasting.

■ Each room in the El Cortez Hotel (the site of the conference) received a 24-hour access show, including live conference coverage.

■ Home Box Office and American Television and Communications Corporation donated three hours of coast-to-coast time on Satcom I for a call-in program with conference highlights. They reached 500 HBO affiliates in 47 states; the show received 50 calls from 30 states as panelists talked about access by the pool of the El Cortez Hotel.

Northeast

■ Cape Cod Cablevision invested \$300,000 in access in Yarmouth, MA, after one year and 11 hours of weekly programming. The programs included "Books and the World" and the satiric "Real to Reel TV."

■ Schenectady, NY was cablecasting 25 hours of programming per week.

■ After four years, the high school based programming center in Dover, NH was cablecasting 11 to 20 hours a week of programming by individuals and six to 10 hours a week of programming by organizations.

■ After broadcasting 30 programs on Rochester's public TV station in six years, Portable Channel premiered its first made-for-cable program on five cable access channels in five communities in Monroe County, NY.

An Access Conference in San Diego

■ The Community Video Center in San Diego hosted a three-day conference on access in August. Among the notable speakers were former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson, House Communications Subcommittee Chairman Lionel Van Deerlin (D-CA),

■ Northeast Video Network was formed to cover another occupation of Seabrook's nuclear power plant site; tapes were copied and sent to 22 cable systems for simultaneous cablecasting; telephones linked the sites to Seabrook for live reports.

■ NFLCP's Northeast Regional Conference was held in Albany, NY. About 90 community programmers attended, and an informal regional steering committee was established.

■ The Downtown Community TV Center trained 2,500 to 4,000 people in New York's Chinatown; tapes were played mostly on closed circuit because most of the neighborhood was (and still is) not wired.

Central States

■ Channel 7 in Bloomington, IN took over coverage of city council meetings from the local PBS affiliate.

■ East Lansing, MI was cablecasting 30 hours of community programming each week.

■ Warner's long-awaited QUBE project began in Columbus, OH.

■ NFLCP's Central States Region closed out 1978 with a November conference in Columbus, OH. QUBE was the focus of the conference.

■ In November, Kettering, OH (one of six cities wired as a part of the Miami Valley Cable TV Council in the Dayton suburbs) activated its first access channel. Space for the studio was donated by a local church.

Midwest

■ Drew Shaffer was hired as the coordinator of Dubuque Community Access TV in Dubuque, IA, and an editing center for access users was established with help from the



Karen Possner of the House Communications Subcommittee staff and Tom Casey of the FCC's Cable Bureau, participated in numerous workshops at NFLCP's first national convention.

National Endowment For The Arts.

■ With great fanfare, the Madison Community Access Center in Madison, WI, finally opened its doors.

■ By the fall, 2,000 rural residents of Trempealeau County in Western Wisconsin had signed up to subscribe to the first cooperatively owned countywide cable system in the U.S. The Farmers Home Administration provided funds for construction. The project included the development of an interactive instructional delivery system, linking eight schools and a technical institute.

Southwest

■ Austin Community Television was finally allocated its own channel and Brian Owens served as ACTV's general manager; during this year its programming expanded from three to six nights per week.

■ Galveston Community Television expanded its programming to 20 hours per week.

■ Allan Winter became NFLCP's new regional coordinator.

Far West

■ The access center in Hayward, CA celebrated its fifth anniversary.

■ NFLCP's Far West region met for the first time in San Francisco in April; the focus was on assembling information on access organizations in California and increasing local jurisdiction over access.

■ San Francisco had only 16 percent cable penetration, but access groups like Bay Area Video Coalition and the Piedmont Avenue News provided a great deal of local programming on access channels in the bay area.

■ Carolyn Perkins stepped in to serve as the NFLCP's Far West regional coordinator.

■ The Community Video Center began classes for senior citizens throughout San Diego County under the funded PACE project (Public Access to Cable TV By and For Elders). "Seniors spotlight" ran weekly on Mission Cable, a newsletter began for the group, and within two years, 200 seniors were trained; they produced 40 one-half hour shows in 1978.

Mountain States

■ Community access training began in El Jebel, CO by Valley Vision TV; access operated out of a renovated chicken coop in a cow pasture.

Moves

■ The NFLCP Northwest split off from the Far West NFLCP region; Sky Khali was chosen as the Northwest regional coordinator.

■ Mickey Brandt was elected to the NFLCP board of directors at the fall Mid-Atlantic meeting in Ocean City, NJ.

■ Sue Buske moved to Dayton, OH to coordinate both the NFLCP and the Miami Valley Cable TV Consortium.

■ Sallie Fischer moved to Minneapolis to run University Community Video. She relinquished her position as chair of the NFLCP board of directors to David O'Keefe of Rome, GA.

■ Manuel Gonzalez went from Hayward, CA to Fresno, CA to serve as access coordinator.

FIRST NFLCP CONVENTION DRAWS 240

It was the Sangria that made me accept the job of coordinating the NFLCP's First National Convention—Sangria and a half-dozen wild-eyed steering committee members gone berserk on public access discussions and Mexican hot sauce. They weakened my resistance and numbed my senses, cajoled my ego with compliments, filled my glass with Convincer, and then laid their vision on me.

I laughed and said, "Sure we can do it! Sure we can coordinate a cross country convention with half-a-hundred workshops and hold meetings besides and get all those names on the mailing lists connected to faces at a convention."

It wasn't until the next morning that I realized what the Sangria had done. . . .

Let's wallow for a moment in our success. We deserve it. The First National Conven-

tion was a success beyond anyone's wildest expectations. We hoped to gather some 200 access people from around the country for 45 workshops. Over 240 dedicated producers, artists, facilitators, educators, librarians and regulators came and participated in 50 sessions. We hoped to conduct the business of the NFLCP and elect a National Board of Directors. We built an organization that's as solid as steel and as flexible as a willow. We wanted to bring isolated producers together to establish a nationwide support system. We became a family.

People and organizations came through for us. Carol Brown Eilber and the University of Wisconsin Extension supplied facilities and organizational leadership far beyond the call of duty. Sue Smoller, the City of Madison, and the Cable-TV Office crew worked with the Wisconsin Arts Board to record our sessions (more than 78 hours) and extend the information presented to those who were unable to attend. The National Endowment for the Arts backed their belief in us with a grant and sent Marion Dix to work with us. The people at the Madison Community Access Center welcomed us with great fanfare and Complete Channel TV featured us in a marathon four-hour live phone-in cable program. The people of Madison opened their homes to us. Local merchants donated refreshments, equipment, and a party room. Local musicians donated \$450 worth of music so that we could dance the Virginia reel.

George Stoney called us his children and said our work in access is just beginning. Stan VanDerbek dazzled us with new movements in the dance of the light fantastic. The FCC made themselves accessible through Tom Casey, Larry Bloom, and Sharon Briley . . . and then delivered the news of deregulation. Karen Possner came from the House Communications Subcommittee with



PACE students learn to operate video camera for their senior citizens program in San Diego.

similar news. Gene Carey told parables of grassroots wisdom, common courage, and individual dedication to "telling it as it is" that, when reflected by each of us in our work, will keep the light of access burning in this country even after the federal regulators think they've pulled the plug. Frank Carlile warned that access, by itself, is not enough to affect the changes we are after. Representatives of American Television and Communication Corporation (ATC) demonstrated a concern for community programming and local production that encouraged us to believe that enlightened attitudes are *not* extinct at a corporate level. Tim Kennedy shared his insights in the use of video and film for social change. Media Bus and Nancy Cain sent people home with new inspiration. The list could go on and on.

We came from across the country as long-lost relatives, but now the family is together. There will be other reunions—we'll discover many other cousins in the future. But it will be some time before another gathering is as memorable for the emotion and good spirits we discovered. Seldom can the event exceed our wildest fantasies. At our First National Convention, it did. We can wallow, briefly, in our success. But now we must move on.

When the convention was over I joined some of those same sirens who had plied me with Sangria in New York City. They sat around an outdoor table at the Fess Hotel sipping Tequila Sunrises and draining pitchers of Old Milwaukee beer. It had worked, worked well, and worked for all of us. But I had learned something . . . next time Sangria won't be enough. I'm familiar with its power. The next time I agree to anything like this it will take Jack Daniel's, nothing less.

Gary Knowles, NFLCP Newsletter, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1978.

NFLCP'S ORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS

Urban Planning Aid (Boston), United Methodist Communications (New York), Portable Channel (Rochester), the Fridley Cable TV Commission (Minn.), Madison Community Access Center (Wis.), Covenant Cable TV (Millville, NJ), Community Video Center (Lebanon, PA), Public Issues Network (Washington, D.C.), Video Action Center (Columbus, IN), Tri-City Regional Library (Rome, GA), Tele-

communications Group at NCSU (Raleigh, NC), S. Yarmouth Community Access (S. Yarmouth, MA), and DuBuque Community Access TV (Iowa). . . .

THE FIRST HOMETOWN USA VIDEO FESTIVAL WINNERS

- "Showdown at the Hoe-down," by **Sol Korine** and **Blaine Dunlap**. A Tennessee Fiddlers Jamboree featuring local music, crafts, philosophy, and humor.

- "This is TV—America," by **Tom DeWitt**. A satire of standard television fare featuring discussion and skits on journalism, soaps, game shows, sex, and violence.

- "As Large as Life and Twice as Natural," by **David Brown** and **Greg Pratt**. A documentary of "Natural Life," a nationally and internationally known jazz group living and performing in the "Twin Cities."

- "You Can Use Your Own Words," by **Brian Lee** and **Rachel Kranz**. This tape follows a multi-racial group of St. Paul, Minn. high school students as they create *No View High-Rise*, their musical

play about inner-city problems.

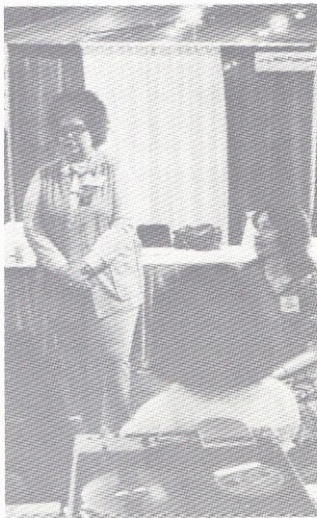
• "A Common Man's Courage," by **Jim Mulligan** and **John DeGraf**. The story of John T. Bernard, a radical Congressman from Northern Minnesota, who was very active in the 30s and 40s in international affairs.

• "A Time Piece," by **David Brown**, **Ellen Hyker**, and **Peggy Imig**. This program celebrates time and its relativity to us all.

• "Eat Your Vegetables," by **Jim Frances**. This tape was produced in Oregon at a special open school which makes every effort to get its students involved in the learning process.

• "A Ryder's Colors," by **Billy Soul**. A documentary about two members of a bikers' club who were killed two days after the original taping and editing was finished.

Although "Hometown" was not set up as a competition, the judges were asked to choose on the basis of subject matter, technical quality, and how well a given tape repre-



NFLCP's booth at NCTA.

sented a cross section of materials received. Judges Barb Luderowski, Nancy Jersuale, James Irwin, Sue Staab, and David Paschel represent a variety of backgrounds including an access coordinator, a filmmaker, and a film critic.

"Hometown" grew out of the need for a representative

example of contemporary software for use on public access channels, the need to facilitate community use of CATV for social change, and the need to illustrate the "state of the art" of independent access programming on a national scale.

1979

Ayatollah Khomeini . . .
Laetrile . . .
Three Mile Island . . .
John Travolta . . .
Margaret Thatcher . . .
Pioneer II photographs Saturn . . .
Afghanistan . . .
Oil spills on the Gulf of Mexico . . .
SALT II . . .
\$1/gallon gas . . .
The Village People

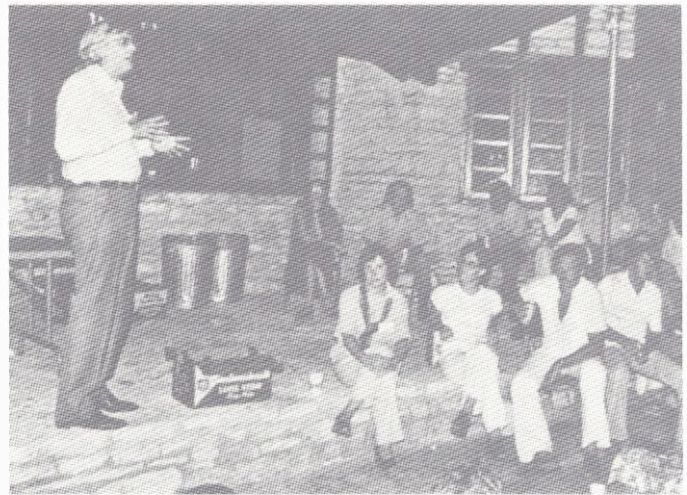
Midwest Video II

■ In April, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the lower court decision in *FCC vs. Midwest Video*. The high court ruled that the FCC did not have the statutory authority to require public access. Many access advocates thought that this ruling would have a disastrous effect on the future prospects for access.

■ Following the Court's decision, the United Church of Christ and the Consumer Federation of America filed a petition with the FCC, proposing the reinstatement of rules requiring local origination. A number of NFLCP members filed comments in support of the petition.

NFLCP Grows

■ By the end of the year, NFLCP's membership climbed to 442, including 39 organizational members. This growth was due in a large part to the successful national conference



Ted Conant addresses convention participants Thursday night after an outdoor Mexican feast.

in Austin and the successful regional conferences.

■ 28 percent of all members were from the Midwest, 23 percent were from the Northeast; the distribution was fairly even elsewhere. Access centers in the northeast, midwest, and central states provided the most organizational support.

Washington, D.C.

■ In January, the board of directors met in Washington, D.C., and they used the occasion to make a round of visits.

■ The board met with FCC staff members who prepared the U.S. position for the World Administrative Radio Conference.

■ They discussed the possibility of imposing federally mandated access channels with Karen Possner and other members of the House Communications Subcommittee (Possner called the idea social engineering with no place in a free market).

■ They spoke to representatives from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting.

■ They also had meetings with the National Telecommunications Information Admin-

istration (who had no idea that local cable access channels were actually being used), Citizens' Communications Center, (a public interest communications law firm who provided legal assistance to York Community Access TV), and the National Cable Television Association (NCTA offered to allow NFLCP a larger role in their Las Vegas conference, including a \$500 expense allowance for the NFLCP booth).

■ The National Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies (NCASLP) asked the NFLCP board members to promote NCASLP's cause through the NFLCP newsletter.

■ The U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs, asked how they could help NFLCP disseminate information on access nationally.

At NCTA

■ NCTA had an all-time high attendance of 6,350 at its Las Vegas conference entitled, "Visions '79."

■ Marshall McLuhan, Ted Turner, and Ralph Nader appeared together on the convention's most popular panel.

■ NFLCP was represented at several seminars by Sue Buske, Sue Smoller, and Paul Denn.

■ HBO hosted a lavish tent party in the desert.

■ The highlight was a two-way conversation via satellite between three industry representatives and President Carter.

■ Bay Area videomakers from San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Hayward, and Marin County captured four out of the 10 ACE Awards.

■ Programmers attempted to sell shows to the ever-increasing number of cable satellite services popping up; independent filmmakers temporarily stopped talking film and started talking cable (\$\$\$).

Educators Conference

■ NFLCP co-hosted its first specialized conference on educators and cable in September with the University of Wisconsin-Extension in Madison; Carol Brown Eilber coordinated the event and it was a success.

■ Ralph Lee Smith delivered the keynote address to 200 educators from across the nation.

National News

■ Sue Buske moved to Ohio to coordinate the Miami Valley Cable TV Council in Kettering, and ran NFLCP from there as a volunteer.

■ The *NFLCP Newsletter* was transformed into the *Community Television Review*—a move designed to reflect a broader scope of issues for the journal.

■ Filling the shoes of the former newsletter collective is the new *CTR* editorial group: Tom Borrup, Phyllis Joffe, Ann McIntosh, Sharon Goldenberg, Lou DiLiberto, Lise Steinzor, Peter Brown, and others at the St. Johnsbury TV Co-op.

■ In August, NFLCP representatives addressed 25 state and local policymakers at the 5th Annual National Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies.

Oh, That Armadillo!

■ 200 NFLCP members from 30 states traveled to Austin, TX for Tex-Mex cooking and NFLCP's 2nd annual convention, which was coordinated by Brian Owens and Donna Green; the host was Austin Community Television.

■ The keynote address was delivered by consultant/futurist/investment maven Ted Conant; he gave convention participants a preview of the future by showing them 3-D TV (and don't forget to put on those glasses!).

■ Margie Nicholson, coordinator of Hometown USA, presented the winners.

■ Convention delegates sent a message to Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin (D-CA) in response to his audiotaped comments on H.R. 3333 which proposed pre-emption of the state and local regulation of cable; delegates called for a Federal access mandate, authorizing states and local governments to regulate cable.

■ After a hot conference, the local hosts took out-of-town-ers for a visit to Hippie Hollow to take a dip.

■ The NFLCP presented its annual George C. Stoney Award to the Western Wisconsin Communications Cooperative for their successful construction of an innovative rural cable system serving schools and home subscribers.

Northeast

■ Robin Stahl from Schenectady, NY succeeded Phyllis Joffe (Plainsfield, VT) as regional coordinator.

■ *NE News* was mailed to members monthly by editors Paige Amidon and Susan Bednarczyk (Xerox and Selectric paste-up courtesy of the "Kramer vs. Kramer" production office). This was the first monthly regional newsletter.

■ About 80 participants attended an NFLCP meeting in May. The guest speaker was Sue Castle from Videotape in Quebec.

■ 50 people met in April to form a New York City chapter.

■ Nancy Bicknell began an access operation in Tarrytown, NY for McLean Cable. She was assisted by Garrett McCarey.

■ Rob McCausland, Dan Jones, Marty Kessell, and other access advocates formed the Boston Cable TV Access Coalition in June to Ensure broadbased public involvement in the Boston franchising process.

■ In November, Portable Channel in Rochester, NY hosted an NFLCP Regional Conference.

Mid-Atlantic

■ Regional business was held in June at Mike Wex's fabulous Cross Country Cable facility in Bound Brook, NJ; 16 community programmers attended.

Central States

■ Central States coordinator Don Smith from Bloomington, IN was succeeded by East Lansing's Randy Van Dalsen. The region embarked on a membership campaign and prepared to be the host of the 1980 NFLCP convention.

■ Adam Haas, the municipal access coordinator for Miami Valley, OH, coordinated the live cablecast of two town council meetings in the Dayton Suburbs and produced a documentary on Kettering's first neighborhood plan.

■ Public access chief Dave Womeldorf certified 200 Miami Valley residents. The programs included "Handle with Care" on the physically handicapped and "It's Here," a Saturday Night Live-style show.



Howard Symons, Congress Watch attorney, makes a point as George Shapior, attorney for Midwest Video objects. FCC Staffer, Sharon Briley, looks on. They are discussing Midwest Video II.

■ "Skateboard '78" drew the best response of all shows cablecast by the Columbus Video Action Center in Indiana. The most active producers on Channel 4 were the Quinco Consulting Center (series on parenting and divorce), the librarian doing kids' storytime, religious groups, schools, and the parks department.

■ East Lansing's WELM-TV went color and completed its first comprehensive audience survey; up to this point, WELM had cablecast 1200 hours of original programming.

■ "Kids Alive" celebrated its fourth anniversary in Bloomington, IN.

Midwest

■ Marge Nicholson from Monona, WI was elected regional coordinator, succeeding Marilyn Rehnberg (Rockford, IL).

■ University Community Video hosted NFLCP's spring regional conference in Minneapolis, and drew 70 attendees.

■ Gail Healy from Dubuque, IA began a regional newsletter.

■ Ann Davis of the Minnesota State Cable Commission organized a cable programming award competition in that state.

■ NFLCP's Fall Regional Conference was held at the Chicago Editing Center in November.

■ Access began in Abilene, KS. It was coordinated by Michael Ann McKenna from the local library; library-made tapes included "They Lunch Alone" and "Summer in Abilene;" heavy users were the Abilene Recreation Center, Kansas Power & Light, and the Abilene Ministerial Association.

Southwest

■ Open Channel formed in Fayetteville, AR as a consortium of arts, social service, and community groups; Warner awarded the group a 5-year contract to manage access.

Mountain States

■ Quote . . . Unquote, Inc. was organized as a media access center in Albuquerque, NM under the guidance of Bill and Denise Makley; a CETA contract was awarded which provided for five employees; Bill and Denise supported themselves with full-time and part-time jobs.

Far West

■ Three out of five cable TV bills introduced in the California state legislature were sponsored by the cable industry.

■ The NFLCP's Far West Region drafted its own bill to address access channel security, line extension policy, and "life line" rates.

■ In March and April, negotiating sessions occurred among the industry, the NFLCP's Far West Region, League of California Cities, and the state Department of Consumer Affairs. The negotiations resulted in a new California law which would prohibit local governments from regulating the rates of cable operators who paid 50¢ to an access foundation. The foundation (which is known today as the Foundation For Community Service Cable Television) would distribute funds to local cable programmers and develop guidelines for access channel management.

And On The Whole

■ The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Public Telecommunications Facilities Program allowed cities, access centers, and educational institutions to apply for grants for the first time.

■ Programming by and for the deaf community appeared on "Deaf Digest," a weekly show by the Deaf TV Resource Center in Kitchener, Ontario.

FEDERATION TRUNKLINE

East Lansing, Mich.: When it comes to audience response to cable access programming, WELM-TV (Public Access Cable 11) has all the answers. Their newly completed survey of viewers' homes gives all the statistics on interest in the public access, school, library, and city programming. "MSU Hockey" series was singled out as access viewers' favorite program (nearly 10% of all subscribers tune in weekly).

RANDY VAN DALSEN, Public Access Coordinator, also singled out this series as an achievement because of its high-quality production (5 cameras, 2 video replay angles, and 14-person crew). Other series in order of popularity: "Tee Vee Trivia" (7% of subscribers), "WELM News" (7%), "Impressions" by the Lansing Catholic Diocese (leads in popularity with viewers over 35 years old), "Tempo" by MIKE DOYLE and BILL DAVIS on movies and TV (4%), and "Black Notes" by the Black Notes Media Workshop (4% and the longest running access program).

In all, about 75% of subscribers (12,200 viewers) are aware of WELM's public access programs and 53% actively watch the channel. Awareness and viewing of other access channels is slightly lower, but significant nonetheless for access.

Susan Bednarczyk, *CTR*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1980.

KIDS ALIVE

Every other Thursday after school, Channel Three (Bloomington, Ind.) is invaded by children who come to make television. They arrive in twos

and threes, some to run camera, some to direct, some to do interviews and skits or to perform.

It's "Kids Alive" time and for two hours, seeming chaos reigns as novice camera-persons tilt, pan, and zoom through a series of conversations with local sports figures, educators and artists, through parodies of commercials and critical reviews of books, movies, and restaurants.

The kids do it all. They plan the program the week before, contacting guests, arranging interviews, writing scripts, building props, drawing graphics. Then they put them all together in a one half-hour live program, which occasionally runs 25 minutes, sometimes 33.

"Kid's Alive" is the center of our involvement with children's programming at Channel Three. It was begun in 1975 by Carol Batty, the children's librarian at the Monroe County Public Library, and has continued since under the guidance of Ginny Richie and Dana Burton. Dana is mainly responsible for coordinating the program now. She schedules workshops, arranges field trips, conducts planning sessions, and shepherds the kids through the productions.

"Kid's Alive" is open to any child ages 8-15, from Bloomington and Monroe County. Kids become involved through a series of workshops. Most start with the basic camera workshop. From there they work up through the ranks and learn to operate our portable SEG, to conduct interviews, and to host the programs.

Each summer, we spend a week with a crew of children covering the Monroe County Fair. There they learn how to approach people and ask for interviews and how to cope with all the problems of shooting on location.

Once a year we take 10 to 12 kids on a field trip to another part of the state. They learn to structure a program in the field and usually come up with mini-

documentaries on the places we visit. Two segments from one of these programs, "A Tour of the Muncie Children's Museum," won first prize in a state-sponsored media fair. Some kids are already planning for future entries.

Several kids, who have been involved with Channel Three for over four years, have grown up with us and have begun to produce their own programs.

Our children's programming is one of the most important things we do at Channel Three, and it has helped us develop broad community support for our access efforts. We have found that children love to explore and use the medium that dominates their lives, that they are good at making television, and that they are a joy to work with.

Don Smith and Rebecca McKelvey, *CTR*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1980.

HOMETOWN USA VIDEO FESTIVAL WINNERS

Sherwood Anderson's Blue Ridge Country, one of eight tapes cited for an award, is a 30-minute dramatic documentary of Anderson's life in rural Virginia speaking out against labor exploitation and crippling effects of the Depression. It was produced by Walter Boris of Lakeland Community College and Pat Fitzgerald of Bowling Green University, Ohio.

Dick Reese: Mule Farm visits one of the country's largest mule farms. Dick Reese of Gallatin, Tennessee describes his operation and explains how mules are used in this production by Charles Guthrie for Community Access Channel Seven/Monroe County Public Library in Bloomington, Indiana.

Roxie Cole, Terry Skinner and B. Cook produced *Down by the Riverside*, a program of music and interviews video-

taped at an all-day river festival. This was produced for Access-Dayton, Channel 30, Viacom Cablevision, in Dayton, Ohio.

Aspen Camp School for the Deaf follows a hearing child and his struggle to communicate in this camp for deaf children. It was produced by Margie Kamine Eneman at Grass-Roots TV in Aspen, Colorado.

Passengers, a documentary about two women riding a bus for the first time, was produced by the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, California.

Walls of Water was produced by Nancy Jesuale after Johnstown, Pennsylvania's devastating flood in the summer of 1977. In addition to showing the townspeople's reactions and the wide destruction, the program created a line of communication for people without electricity and little means of transportation living under martial law.

Forced Work, produced by University Community Video in Minneapolis, is an intimate portrait of three women on the W.I.N. welfare program and shows the women at work, the welfare office, and at home.

The House That Jack Built is a documentary about a unique non-government funded haven for people in need in New York City. It was produced by Jim Anderson and Wendy Walton.

The Hometown U.S.A. Video Festival also selected three videotapes for honorable mention. Cited were *It's Here*, a comedy-variety program produced by Alan Jones and Alfred Ector at South of Dayton Access, Centerville, Ohio; *Sylvia Sirbu Show—International Songs*, produced by Sylvia Sirbu in New York City; and *Natasha at De Angulo*, a portrait of a young girl at Big Sur produced by Joyce Loughran and Richard Becker at Psystar Video in Boston.

HIGH COURT STRIKES DOWN ACCESS RULES

By a six to three vote, the United States Supreme Court affirmed the decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit (St. Louis, Missouri) in the case of *FCC v. Midwest Video Corp.* The decision, handed down on April 2, 1979, clearly supports the ruling of the lower court that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) exceeded its statutory authority by requiring cable television companies to provide access to their medium to members of the public.

The Supreme Court's decision rests on its conclusion that the FCC is prohibited by the Communications Act from requiring public access on broadcast stations and that the FCC has no authority to regulate the cable television service beyond the scope of its jurisdiction over broadcast services.

The Court agreed with arguments of Midwest Video Corp. (a cable television company based in Little Rock, Arkansas) that the FCC's access rules imposed a form of "common carrier" status on cable television services. Section 3(h) of the Communications Act was interpreted by the Court as providing an absolute prohibi-

tion on the regulation of broadcasters as "common carriers."

Josh Koenig, *CTR*, December 1979.

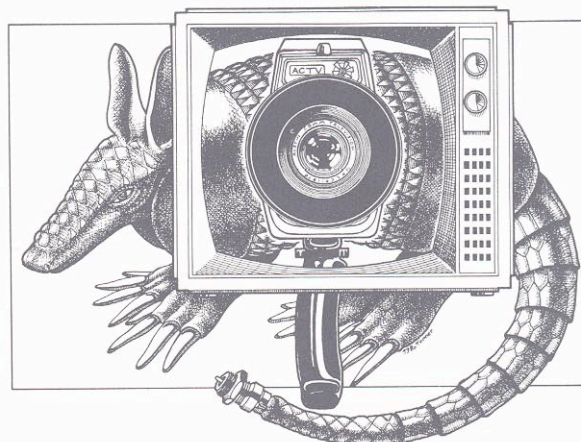
I REMEMBER WHEN . . .

Back in 1979, there was a regular, weekly program on Channel 12 . . . little did I know how much work and time that took. I still took it for granted that this wonderfully weird show would be there every Thursday night.

One night on the show, which was a "Fridley Magazine" news type show, the anchorman read his scrip, which said that the City of Fridley was looking for vampires for the summer. He put his script down and started groaning (this was *live*, before we ever heard of editing) and a voice from somewhere whispered 'Keep going, keep going.' Well, he sat up and said, "actually, they're looking for umpires."

After I finally stopped laughing, and saw the character generator inviting no-experienced camera people to come in. I did just that. One thing led to another and I've been the director here now for four years.

Paula Neuman-Scott, Director, Anoka County Communications Workshop, Fridley, Minnesota, 1986.



The logo for NFLCP's second annual convention in Austin, TX.

1980

Abscam . . .
Mt. St. Helens . . .
Moscow Olympic
boycott . . .
Bani-Sadr . . .
The Moral Majority . . .
John Lennon . . .
"The Official Preppie
Handbook" . . .
J. R. Ewing . . .
15th Saturn moon . . .
Ronald Reagan

Access '80: Event of the Year

■ While the franchising wars were heating up, NFLCP held its third annual convention in East Lansing, MI. The attendance that year rose to over 400.

■ Nearly every established access facility in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, and Central States regions sent representatives. Citicable's Andy Beecher rode his bike all the way from Madison, WI.

■ Workshops emphasized franchising, local regulatory issues, sustaining access operations, special audiences, and new technologies.

■ Paige Amidon, NFLCP's advocacy coordinator, warned NFLCP members that Senate bill 2827 had just been introduced and was going to mark-up. The bill prohibited any local, state, or federal requirements for access channels.

■ An effective flurry of calls, telegrams, mailgrams, action alerts, and press releases came from East Lansing; the news of convention opposition was the lead story on Lansing's 6 o'clock news; the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Detroit News*,

and the industry trades all carried the story.

■ The language was abandoned by the end of the year. Although NFLCP opposition alone did not stop the bill, the results showed that access advocates could muster enough clout through alliances to have a visible impact on Congress.

■ Conference coordinator Randy Van Dalsen organized access volunteers and a donated public TV crew to produce a 2-hour summary of conference proceedings. The tape was shown on HBO. Access '80 was augmented by industry support (United Cable TV, East Lansing Cable Commission, ATC, TCI, Continental, and Sammons) and local sponsors.

■ Old-timers and newcomers were dressed up in suits and ties; a lot of NFLCP members were trying to get franchising jobs within cable corporations—positions from which they felt that they could implement their ideas about local programming. Access advocates wanted to work with the industry, but wondered if they could trust the industry to stand by its franchise promises.

■ Sue Buske received the George Stoney Award.

Cities and Cable

■ NFLCP and the University of Wisconsin's Extension Program co-sponsored a conference on "The Cities and Cable TV" in Madison, WI. There was only room for 400 people and 200 had to be turned away.

■ Conference coordinator Barry Orton took an informal poll of city representatives attending the conference, and was able to estimate that the net worth of franchises represented by people in the room was about \$15 billion.

■ The conference served as a springboard for the formation

of the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA), led by Frank Grief.

■ Madison Mayor Joel Skoronica opened the conference with a welcome to conference participants. He recommended that the Madison city council eliminate funds for government access due to a budget shortfall. The NFLCP's Board sent a letter to the city council's budget committee stressing the national importance of Madison's municipal access operation; the City Council and Board of Estimate kept the city channel going.

■ NFLCP received advance orders from cities in December for NFLCP's franchise primer; the 100-page book showed sample franchises, case studies, and observations on the franchise process (from information collected across the country by Diana Peck). It sold for \$7.00 (definitely cheaper than a consultant).

■ NFLCP co-produced six hours of live coverage of the 57th Annual Convention of the National League of Cities; each day's two-hour HBO cablecast was hosted by Julian Bond, and it included live and taped portions and a call-in segment. The program was produced by Frank Greif and

supported by Cable Atlanta, HBO, Cox Cable and Telecommunications, Inc.

■ Greg Vawter and Jayne Anter of the Miami Valley Cable TV Council coordinated the Hometown USA Video Festival. There were 85 entries.

The Low Power Push

■ The FCC established a new broadcast service by allowing local origination on low-power transmitters and announced they would be accepting applications for stations.

■ Jerry Richter (Reading, PA), Jim Bell (Frankfort, KY), Diana Peck (Patterson, NJ) and Jean Rice (from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration) alerted NFLCP members in urban areas (where frequencies were expected to be filled quickly) and invited all those interested to an intensive workshop.

■ The Appalachian Community Service Network provided some support.

■ Representatives from 30 organizations traveled to Washington, D.C. in December for a low-power TV meeting; a briefing from the FCC staff and a workshop on filing applications.



Paige Amidon, Susan Bednarczyk, and Randy Van Dalsen take a first look at the tape of ACCESS '80, NFLCP's third annual convention. The program was transmitted via satellite to HBO subscribers.

Community Education Task Force

■ Carol Brown Eilber succeeded Jean Rice as volunteer committee coordinator.

■ Anne Stonehocker from Portable Channel in Rochester, NY, compiled NFLCP's first published membership directory.

■ NFLCP began raising funds for its national office by offering consulting services.

CTR

■ After one and one-half years at the St. Johnsbury TV Co-op, CTR moved west with volunteer editor Tom Borrup, who began work at University Community Video (UCV) in Minneapolis.

■ UCV supported CTR's publication with staff. Intern Margaret Schulz handled shipments, billing, and marketing.

■ Advertising rates were set for CTR.

Advocacy Task Force

■ Jay April succeeded Paige Amidon as advocacy committee coordinator. In coordinating the fight against S. 2827, he made four trips to Washington, D.C. and over 400 phone calls to mayors, city cable officers, media organizations, and legislators.

■ April also alerted the staff of the "MacNeil-Lehrer Report" on the significance of S. 2827 and they did a show on S. 2827 with representatives from the National League of Cities and the National Cable Television Association.

At the Center of It All

■ In March, Sue Buske was designated executive director (still an unpaid position) to manage NFLCP's membership office.

■ Robin Whelan became NFLCP's first paid part-time

employee. Her responsibilities included coordinating membership dues, printing NFLCP material, and taking care of correspondence. Office space was donated by Miami Valley Cable TV Council.

■ Dave Bloch organized NFLCP's mailings on his Toledo computer.

■ The board of directors made a commitment to seek funding for a national office in Washington, D.C.

■ 90 Organizational members included cable systems, school districts, access centers, city/county governments, universities, libraries, and religious organizations.

Northeast

■ NFLCP's Northeast regional conference attracted 70 members to Cambridge in May to celebrate the region's fourth anniversary.

■ Regional advocacy activities helped establish progressive access regulations in Rhode Island and Connecticut.

■ The regional coordinators were Anna Marie Piersimoni and Steven Schuster.

■ Boston mayor Kevin White announced that his city would begin franchising.

Mid-Atlantic

■ The Regional coordinators were Jerry Richter and Harriet Moss.

■ Berks Community Television in Reading negotiated an agreement with ATC which included a commitment for an annual \$50,000 to BCTV during the next 6 years (the 17-year-old franchise had no access provisions); in return, BCTV pledged 30 hours per week of programming on the 12-channel system.

■ The NFLCP's Mid-Atlantic Spring Regional Confer-

ence attracted 50 members to its May conference in York, PA (speakers included George Stoney and Mayor Elizabeth Marshall).

■ Over 100 people attended NFLCP's Fall Regional Conference in Reading, PA. Participants observed Reading's five interactive facilities (which were up to 18 miles apart).

Southeast

■ Access Atlanta produced "Encounters," the first public access show in Atlanta.

■ NFLCP's Southwest Region co-sponsored the "Cable TV and the Arts" conference with Access Atlanta and local arts groups; the August event drew 300 participants from all over the U.S.

■ Over 100 people attended the NFLCP Southeast Region's "Minorities and Cable" conference in November. It was coordinated by southeast regional coordinator Jabari Simana, with help from access producers in Atlanta.

■ Rev. Dan Matthews left Knoxville for a ministry in Atlanta, leaving behind Channel 20, the successful, five-year-old public access operation located in St. John's Episcopal Church. Peggy Gilbertson continued as the coordinator of this model access system.

Central States

■ Dave Bloch was regional coordinator.

■ NFLCP's Central States Spring Regional Conference drew 40 to Frankfort, KY. The highlight was the Beefalo chili picnic and barn dance at Hogback Farm.

■ East Lansing reported 140 hours of local cable programming weekly, the studio had been used over 4,000 times in five years of operation.

■ The Development Center for the Arts began cablecast-

ing in Shiawassee County, MI on Owosso Cable.

■ NFLCP's Central States Fall Regional Conference was hosted by the Monroe County Public Library in Bloomington, IN.

■ Don Langley and the United Cable staff in Cincinnati published two issues of the central states regional newsletter.

■ The University of Toledo obtained a \$100,000 grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to establish a public and educational access channel for the 67,000 subscriber system.

Midwest

■ Bill Newborn was the midwest regional coordinator.

■ NFLCP's Midwest Regional Conferences were held in Iowa City (to celebrate the inauguration of access there) and in Madison, WI.

■ In Sun Prairie, WI, Kids 4 received grants from the National Endowment For the Arts and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

Mountain States

■ NFLCP's Mountain States Region held its first official meeting at Quote . . . Unquote, Inc. of Albuquerque, NM in April.

■ Quote . . . Unquote, began video production workshops, signed an agreement to operate one access channel, started remodeling its access facility, and got its 5 CETA positions renewed.

■ To bring access to remote parts of western Colorado, Grass Roots Video in Aspen and Valley Vision TV of Basalt formed a consortium and were awarded CETA and NTIA funds which totalled \$240,000

for mobile production and post production vans.

Far West

■ NFLCP's Far West Fall Regional Conference was held in Modesto, CA. The region also sponsored a hospitality suite at the Western Cable Show in December.

■ Research in San Diego indicated that 10,000 senior citizens watched local cable programs produced by PACE.

■ With money coming from the industry as a quid pro quo for rate deregulation, the California Foundation for Community Service Cable Television, funded PACE, the Siskiyou Performing Arts Center, the Valley Video Network, the California Confederation Low-Riders, and Marin Community Video.

■ Cablecasting began in February in Oakland, CA by Peralta Television on Channel 5 (one of five community channels); Peralta TV was the creation of the Peralta Community College District, Laney College, and Teleprompter.

Northwest

■ NFLCP's first Northwest Regional Conference was held in Seattle, WA.

■ Adam Haas became the Northwest Regional Coordinator.

ACCESS WARS II

The following is a parody of the access movement within the context of the film, *Star Wars*.

Though some were lost in the access battles of the '70s, by and large the fleet of access centers survived. Many Blue Skywalkers in the aftermath of the Court decision [Midwest Video II] turned their thoughts to peaceful co-existence with the industry. With the FCC's protection of the

access bases gone, many hastily built shelters for access with local franchise provisions were built. In the scramble for franchises many cable companies used their Empire's great wealth to build new vehicles for local programming.

In newly franchised cities access advocates hoped these vehicles would be used to further the Access Quest. Programmers working in older systems were less fortunate, and were left to stake out an existence for access somewhere between 12-channel capacity and infrequent franchise renewals.

The calm made many Blue Skywalkers eager to peacefully co-exist with the Cable Empire. Treading softly into employment within the industry, each wondered if his/her belief in the Force of Access Television was strong enough to withstand the pressures of the Empire's powerful Force (Economic Realism) once inside. Phrases echoed throughout the passageway: "free marketplace," "commercially viable," "deregulation," "protection of cable operator's freedom of speech." Skywalker was proud that as an Access Warrior he had succeeded in maneuvering amongst these, and had at long last gained the respect of the Empire.

As Skywalker strode past older, battle-scarred video access bases toward a gleaming new community television studio, a public access veteran appeared and cautioned, "Skywalker, your Idealism is strong and your Belief in Access great, but your greatest test is yet to come." Skywalker looked ahead to the Nirvana of Community Television. He saw a shadow lurking behind the equipment.

"This is better than public access, because we've gone beyond access," said the voice from behind the new camera. "Community TV looks, smells, feels, and tastes like public access, but isn't. We control what goes on the channel so access freaks don't spoil our high-tech look."

Blue Skywalker winced at this all-too-familiar blow to his image—"access freak." How to react? Skywalker felt betrayed. He thought that attacks on the Image of Access had been outlawed by the Era of Peaceful Co-Existence. Was he strong enough to decry the misuse of the access image and say, "I am a Believer in Public Access and I am ready to fight for it."?

Skywalker summoned his Belief in the Force of Access and stood proud. This was the true test. He poised to strike a blow in the name of Pure Ac-

cess, and demanded to know the accuser: "Who dares to decry Public Access in favor of cable operator-controlled channels?" The unarmed figure stepped out from behind the camera and was revealed: Blue Skywalker confronted himself.

"Free marketplace philosophy," "commercial viable," "deregulation," "protection of the cable operator's freedom of speech"... all these phrases spun about Blue Skywalker's head as the Representative of the Empire of the Bottom Line rationalized the latest strategic moves to realign the Empire. Blue Skywalker, balancing upon a catwalk out in space, thinks about what it will be like if those local protections surrounding the access bases are removed. The economic power of the Empire has never been greater.

Offerings via space age communications technology keep even the broadcasters and other galaxy competitors at a distance. There are channels for the access bases now, but what of ten or more years from now when undreamed-of technology and services crowd out the access bases? One wrong step now and those local protections would be gone. The concept of access within the communications galaxy would be lost forever.



Volunteers for Channel 20 in Knoxville, TN set up for a live program.

"Let's join forces and make the Empire greater than ever," offers the Representative of the Empire. "The Empire is the father of the local programming movement. It only grew because the Empire thought it should. Skywalker, we need each other to survive in the galaxy. We want the same things. Trust us."

Skywalker knows there is some truth in what he hears, yet he remembers the battles for Guaranteed Access in bygone years. A line is drawn between them: SB 2827. Skywalker remembers the caution of another Access Warrior: "Reserving channels for public use now is as important as the reservation of park land in the 1880s." Skywalker knows he cannot step over that line and bring about the dissolution of those local access shelters. He cannot accept the conditions of Pure Trust in the Free Marketplace as a substitute for the Quest for Pure Access.

Skywalker knows he must make a move, and makes it in the form of a challenge to the Empire: "If public access and the good it brings is the industry's legitimate heir . . . if the Empire uses the Access Fleet to build its network of franchises . . . if the industry needs the idealism and commitment of the Access Force to survive, then the industry should step across this line. Your step will bring about a legitimacy to your heirs, demonstrate your trust in us, and bring about an Era of Peaceful Co-Existence. Help us strike down this threat to our bases and join in the Quest to Preserve Access."

As an issue, SB 2827 allowed the access movement to confront the opposing forces tugging at the soul of Blue Skywalker and bring them into balance. The access movement clearly wants recognition for its value to the industry, and wants it on no uncertain terms—banish that Devil of Bad Public Access Image once and for all by admitting that pub-

lic access is successful and desirable.

Municipalities, educators, and non-profit organizations programming actively on access channels now, are excited by the chance to co-exist with the industry that promises to be the New Leader in Television, but they don't want a paper commitment that can be thrown away five, ten, or twenty years down the line. Jobs within the industry will be eagerly snapped up by those fired by a commitment to local, community-responsive television, but the industry commitment must not be hollow.

Until the industry is brave enough to take Skywalker's lead, confront its own love/hate relationship with public access, and work to create a respectable base for Guaranteed Public Access to the Medium of Television, one can only predict that "Access Wars" will be playing in cities across the nation for an extended run.

Susan Bednarczyk, *CTR*, Vol. 3, No. 2 & 3, 1980.

I REMEMBER WHEN . . .

A tenet of community pro-belonged in the place. The their jobs is evident in the way mentary reveals a community-television production, you're also teaching them about communication, their community, political action and on and on.

Well, add something else to that list of lessons!

I remember when I was teaching a group of cub scouts how to use ATC's community programming equipment in Iowa City, Iowa. I'd just finished a rather lengthy presentation on the various types of plugs used for audio—stressing the importance of knowing what kind was needed for each mike and describing the ends as either "male" or "female."

One of the little cherubs then posed the only question

on the subject, "Why do they call them male and female?"

Rather than add sex education to the list of items taught in community programming studios, I giggled along with the group and let it remain a rhetorical question.

Karen Kalergis, 1986.

PUBLIC ACCESS IN KNOXVILLE

When Father Dan Matthews dreamed up the idea of turning the first floor of the parish house into an access studio and engaged as Coordinator Mary Jane McGee, a local actress who became at the same time an Alternate Media Center intern in cable TV, few except Episcopalians felt they belonged in the place. The blacks were no more ill-at-ease here (today) than Knoxville's predominantly "hillbilly" population or its sizable citizenry of un-churched urbanites, attracted to this booming industrial center of 182,000 people, who regard anything associated with church as passe if not downright threatening to their privacy and freedom of thought. Now all these groups frequent Channel 20's friendly, informal space as their own.

The fact that Channel 20 is now thought of by most of its users and viewers as "incidentally Episcopalian" is a tremendous tribute to the resolve of Father Dan and his staff that this should be a true community facility rather than just an outlet for a particular brand of Christianity.

The possibility of an alternative development, had Channel 20 been in different hands, is one good reason to raise questions about the advisability of having any access center so beholden to a single entity, church related or otherwise. (The same questions could be raised about access centers sponsored by school systems or colleges or cable companies themselves.) But Channel 20's

success is also proof that, given good will, patience and the continuity made possible by steady funding, an access center that is a true community facility can be developed from a wide variety of bases, including churches.

Channel 20's support still comes mainly from St. John's, which contributes \$28,000 a year in cash plus what might be an equal amount in space, utilities and services. The City of Knoxville contributes \$20,000. There have been grants for specific program series and small contributions from viewers. It looks to CETA for four of its six paid staff.

There is still no regular contribution from the cable company, Athena Cablevision, beyond the provision of "live" feeds. Nothing in the franchise gives Channel 20 a designated portion of the City's franchise fee.

Meanwhile, those of us who think of public access as a movement that should be dominated at all times by volunteers have every reason to celebrate what Channel 20 is doing right now, and to hope that this will not change, however much it may prosper in the future. General Manager Peggy Gilbertson is herself something of a model in this regard.

Three years ago Peggy came into the Center as part of the Medical Auxiliary, an organization of physicians' wives who wanted to do a program. "People were forever asking us questions only our husbands could answer but were either intimidated to ask them, or the doctors weren't giving them answers they could understand. We thought if we asked the doctors these questions on the air it might help." Thus began the weekly program "Health Line."

Peggy had taught school, then reared three sons but had no experience in video or broadcasting. She learned fast, and loved it. When Father Dan asked her to pinch hit as Coordinator, Peggy ex-

plained, "all I had to prepare me for the job was 25 years of experience in the community as a volunteer. And I'm a Presbyterian, not an Episcopalian!"

Needless-to-say, 25 years as a volunteer in the community was the most important preparation Mrs. Gilbertson could have had for the job.

The variety and consistency of programming on Channel 20 is due in no small measure to Peggy's knowledge of how to work with people who are volunteering their time. She is also a superb supervisor of staff. That she respects their expertise and trusts them to do their jobs is evident in the way they talk with a visitor about their work. She is proud of the fact that hers is a "part time job, really. I don't need to be down here all day long."

Back in 1974, when Father Dan Matthews persuaded his congregation to devote so much space, money and effort to Knoxville's public access effort, the chances of St. John's reaping a reward in terms of membership or prestige must have seemed slight. His was an act of considerable faith and foresight. For the several years when the cable picture was dark his congregation continued to back his efforts. So Father Dan must have sown his seeds well.

Last summer Father Dan moved to Atlanta where he is again directing the affairs of another big, influential downtown church. This is good news for Atlantans who need his kind of citizen-leadership to develop truly participatory cable access in their town.

It is equally good news that the Rev. James L. Sanders has succeeded the Rev. Matthews at St. John's in Knoxville and has the backing of his congregation to continue with Peggy Gilbertson the work Father Dan and Mary Jane McGee began so well back in '75.

George Stoney, *CTR*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1981.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE WITH READING POLICE

In Reading, PA, a recent police raid on the city high school, culminating in the arrest of forty students, resulted in a great deal of controversy over the action of the police and insecurity about the state of discipline at the school.

Superficial and sensational coverage of the event by the local broadcast television station did little to shed light on the situation and, in fact, seemed to exacerbate tensions between students and police. The raid occurred at 8 a.m. on a Friday morning and was brought up for discussion at 11 a.m. during "Bridging the Generation Gap," a weekly interactive program which links students with senior citizens for informal discussions.

The following Monday evening a two hour, interactive program brought together representatives from the police, school district and high school administration, the student council, and, through cable television, the general public. This permitted an in-depth explanation and discussion of the reasoning behind the police action, the opinions and feelings of the students and school administrators and input, in the form of questions and suggestions, from home viewers.

The students suggested to the police, publicly on live television, that the presence of a highly visible mounted police officer in the area of the school would deter many of the problems which everyone admitted existed. The Chief of Police agreed to this proposal and it was quickly implemented.

The feedback from the this program was so positive that, as a result, the Reading Police Department requested a regular time slot in BCTV's programming schedule as a means

of increasing its dialogue with the public.

Jerry Richter, *CTR*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1981.

NATOA IS BORN

The National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) was formed at last October's conference on Cable and Cities sponsored by the NFLCP and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. It was the first national gathering of local officials charged with regulating the last mile of cable. For many in attendance the workshop discussions on specific issues were real eye openers. While NFLCP and the Cable Television Information Center have provided valuable information and resources during the franchise battles of the past few years, many of those in attendance felt the need for some kind of direct information sharing among those involved in ongoing regulation.

Following the last session of the conference almost 50 people met to discuss ways of continuing the dialogue started in Madison. It was determined that a formal organization might be the best method and 15 volunteers agreed to serve on a steering committee to form NATOA.

Membership will be divided into two categories. Full membership will be open to all elected and appointed local officials dealing with telecommunications and to all members of telecommunications advisory boards sanctioned by local government. Full members will receive the newsletter, have voting rights and other special privileges. Associate membership will be open to non-industry individuals involved in the planning, development, programming or research of cable. They will receive copies of the newsletter.

It will be no easy task to pull such a national organization

together. Therefore, NATOA has agreed to affiliate itself with the National League of Cities which will act as secretariat. NLC has developed a strong position in cable with the formation of a special Cable Task Force and the approval of a Code of Franchise Standards and Practices. With NLC's organizational abilities and strong commitment to telecommunications issues the arrangement should benefit each group.

Frank Greif, *CTR*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1981.

HOMETOWN USA BICYCLE TOUR

Loisaida—A Movement on its Own Accord! This documentary reveals a community-based corporation providing assistance to revitalize neighborhoods (by George Pessin and Edgar Price of Channel L Working Group, Inc., N.Y.C., New York).

Janine After three and one half years of work with an autistic child, this student of occupational therapy captured her home and family life with camera and portapak (by Bernadette Mineo and David Gumpel of New York University Video, N.Y.C., New York).

Generations Here is a local video magazine for an older generation with tape of a senior citizens' exercise program, officials at the Department of Aging, and a conference of Gray Panthers (by Kathy Coster, Baltimore County Public Library, Towson, Maryland).

Francis Through the Looking Glass The 78-year-old poet, Robert Francis, describes his work and his life with the terms: simplicity and clarity. This black and white portrait fits those themes perfectly (by David Skillicorn and Fain Gildea, San Francisco, California).

World's Apart This musical satire uses drama, humor and musical talent to mount a counter-attack against the energy industry's propaganda. It also provides a humorous, but scathing, indictment of government energy policy (by Alan McGlade of Videomakers, San Diego, California).

You Can Start the Poetry Now! or "News From Crazy Horse" is a dramatization of a poem by Thomas McGrath (by Daniel Pullen and Doug Hamilton of Moorhead State University, Moorhead, Minnesota).

Kids' Stuff In this video magazine, children do the interviews, review the books, and have a hand in the production. It is a local show for children, by children, with a little help from their friends (by Abby Lazar and Susan Miller, Syracuse, New York).

Women Take Back the Night! Women organized a rally and march of 5,000 women in Minneapolis. This documentary assures that women and men will not forget their inspiring protest against rape, battering and incest (by Iris Video, Minneapolis, Minnesota).

Loiseau De Feu (the Firebird) Starting with video images of the orchestra and photographs of the composer, this piece surprises and entertains with video colorization and synthesis to Stravinsky's "The Firebird" (by John Garrison Rauh of Guerrilla Video, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland).

Bogatron Olympics When Lake Placid moves to the hill-sides and beaches near San Diego, only Bogatron Video could cover the bogus events (by John Dennehy, Bogatron Video, San Diego, California).

1981

The hostages return . . .
Sandra Day O'Connor . . .
John Hinkley, Jr. . . .
Indiana Jones . . .
The royal wedding . . .
Solidarity . . .
Reagonomics . . .
Baseball strike

National Office At Last

■ In April, Sue Buske is hired as NFLCP's executive director. She left her position at the Cable Television Information Center.

■ In October, NFLCP opened an office at 906 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E. (nine blocks from the Capitol Building) in Washington, D.C.

■ NFLCP's Low Power Hotline is funded by the John and Mary Markle and Rockefeller Foundations. Pat Watkins directed the project and she is assisted by Joan Gudgel. This new project provided encouragement and assistance to non-profit organizations interested in filing low-power applications.

■ NFLCP co-hosts a conference with the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting on "Consumers and Cable TV." It is funded by the Federal Trade Commission.

■ At the Ohio office, Robin Whelan and Wendy Bailey handle memberships and renewals.

■ NFLCP board member Phyllis Joffe coordinated a March symposium on community television for the American Film Institute. It was held at the Kennedy Center.

■ The Nordsen Foundation provided a grant to NFLCP to draft sample language for cities to use in their cable franchising requests for proposals.

■ By the end of the year, 10 NFLCP members had applied for low-power TV licenses.

■ NFLCP's membership reached 1,300.

■ Diana Peck succeeded Don Smith as chairperson of the NFLCP board of directors.

■ Viacom, Teleprompter, Telecommunications, Inc., United Cable, Metrovision, Times Mirror, Horizon Cable, and American Cablesystems contributed \$28,000 to the NFLCP for an Access Coordinator Training Program.

■ The first session began in Kettering, OH at the Miami Valley Cable TV Council facilities. Each intern became an apprentice for four and one-half weeks. They were placed in East Lansing, MI, Reading, PA, New York, NY and Kettering, OH. The wrap-up session is in Washington, D.C. The tuition for the program is \$1,750.

■ NFLCP introduced its educational packet series. Initial offerings are: "Operating Rules and Procedures, Articles of Incorporation and by-laws, Access Center/Cable Company Contracts, Educators and Cable, and Cable and the Arts."

■ The Hometown USA Video Festival receives 81 entries.

■ Themes for CTR are: "Cable and the Arts," "Municipalities and Cable TV," "Library of the Future," and "Kids' TV."

Access: Coming of Age

■ NFLCP members organize NFLCP's fourth annual convention: "Access: Coming of Age."

■ For the first time, pre-conference seminars are offered. 50 people attend the low-power TV pre-conference workshop conducted by Pat Watkins, and 100 people attended Nancy Bicknell's pre-conference workshop for community programming administrators.

■ Ten years after his initial contact with access activists, Ralph Lee Smith delivers the convention keynote address.

■ NFLCP delegates adopt a full-fledged advocacy platform. It covers freedom of speech, access to information, program diversity, localism, the role of government in community access, cross-ownership, leased access, affirmative action, and privacy.

Northeast

■ Chuck Sherwood from Channel L working Group in New York became the new regional coordinator.

■ 125 people attended NFLCP's Spring Regional Conference at Riverside Church in New York.

■ The New England Program Directors Guild formed to provide support to professional programming directors working in the industry.

■ The Port Washington Public Library (Long Island) celebrated its video project's 10th anniversary. During that period, over 1,900 community members have taken video training. Over 700 tapes on oral history and local issues were archived in the library collection.

■ The Boston cable franchise is awarded to Cablevision in August; in preparation for community programming, the Boston Health Care Cable Consortium and the City of Boston Educational Cable TV Consortium formed in the spring. *The Boston Globe* called for broad-based representation on the to-be-established

lished access corporation board.

Mid-Atlantic

■ Charlotte Bliss became the new regional coordinator.

■ The October meeting at Temple University in Philadelphia featured Cynthia Pols of the National League of Cities and Jay Ricks of the National Cable Television Association. The keynote address was delivered by Les Brown of *Channels of Communications*.

Far West

■ The Far West regional newsletter was published by Peter Brown from Open Channel in Santa Cruz, CA (he formerly assisted Tom Borrup with *CTR* while they were both in Montpelier, VT).

■ NFLCP's Far West Spring Regional Conference is held in Fresno. The Conference focuses on the special needs of access and LO operations.

■ NFLCP members from the far west stress the importance of state support for access in a presentation before the California Public Broadcasting Commission; Marin Community Video shows a video on access throughout the state of California.

Northwest

■ Portland and Seattle reached the final franchising stages.

■ NFLCP's Northwest Spring Regional Conference was held in Portland, OR; there were 160 participants. The Conference generated 80 new members from the region.

■ Marjie Lundell from Multnomah County, OR was elected regional coordinator.

■ In Pocatello, ID, the public library's community video service reported production of 3 to 5 hours of cable programming each week.

Southeast

■ Access Atlanta received the first portion of a \$24,000 grant from Cable Atlanta and hired Kathy Herman as coordinator.

■ Cable Atlanta celebrated its first year of access operations with a mayoral proclamation honoring access. An access awards gala was cablecast live.

■ To follow up on the Miami franchise award, NFLCP's Southeast Fall Regional Conference was held in that city.

Central States

■ Roxie Cole and the Access Dayton staff host the NFLCP's Central States Spring Regional Conference.

■ East Lansing coordinator Mindy Snyder published the WELM access newsletter on a weekly basis.

■ NFLCP members Fred Johnson (Frankfort, KY), Dave Bloch (Toldeo, OH), Don Smith (Bloomington, IN), Bob Muhlbach (East Lansing, MI), and Nancy Dyki (East Lansing, MI) presented a one-day workshop for the Association for Educational Communications and Technology Convention in Philadelphia.

■ Cox Cable and the Cummins Engine Foundation suspended support for the Columbus Video Action Center (in Indiana). In October, businesses and individuals pledged \$11,000 to support the Video Action Center (VAC) and the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller Foundation pledged support to VAC if Cox re-established its support. However, after 8 years, VAC locked its doors December 30, 1981.

Midwest

■ Margie Nicholson and Claudia Crask coordinated the NFLCP's Midwest Spring Regional Conference in Evanston, IL. The conference drew over 200 people, and was one

of the largest NFLCP regional events ever.

■ Lily Ollinger, Director of the Chicago Editing Center, took over as coordinator of NFLCP's midwest region.

■ Access funding in Madison, WI was finally secured, with public and municipal access operations to receive \$140,000 over 5 years.

■ Saved from extinction the year before, Madison's three-person municipal access staff (headed by Andy Beecher) programmed 130 hours of live and taped shows. The character generator filled out the rest of the 24-hour a day channel.

■ Connie Tiffany of Iowa City estimated that 35 hours of video per week were being produced and cablecast on the Iowa City Public Library's Channel in 1981.

■ University Community Video sponsored a national conference on cable and the arts in November.

■ The NFLCP's Midwest Fall

Regional Conference was held in Milwaukee just prior to the city's franchise award.

Southwest

■ NFLCP's Southwest Fall Regional Conference was held in Houston, TX in tandem with the Houston Arts Festival.

■ Austin, TX negotiated a new franchise, and generous public access provisions were made. Austin Community Television (ACTV) expressed interest in managing access under the new agreement. ACTV is given a temporary contract by the City.

■ While Dallas was still being wired, Warner-Amex staff member, Trish Dair reported that 350 community people were trained with another 350 still waiting for space in the classes.

Mountain States

■ Lacking franchise provisions for public access support, Quote . . . Unquote negotiated for operating equipment from Albuquerque's

CONGRATULATIONS

to JEAN

I love you,

George

CTR's first personal ad. George Stoney congratulates Jean Rice for receiving the George Stoney Award.

Tribune Cable Company. They also received funding from the **National Telecommunications and Information Administration and New Mexico's arts and humanities agencies.**

ANALYSIS OF CABLE TV DESIGNS FOR NEW MARKETS

The following figures are based on an analysis of six markets, all evaluated by the Cable Television Information Center: Omaha, Cincinnati, Dallas, five Minneapolis suburbs in a consortium, Mesquite (Texas), and Ft. Worth. Thirty-one cable TV companies' applications were used to determine the following averages:

- Average rate for highest, non-interactive tier of service was \$7.56 for 50.6 activated channels.
- Average market penetration for basic cable television service was 53.4%, with a range from 41% to 69%.
- Average market penetration for pay television was 50.88%, or 95% of cable TV subscribers for those markets.
- Average monthly revenue expected per subscriber was \$21.37, with a range from \$12.10 to \$48.
- Average personnel expense for local cable programming per subscriber per year was \$7.80, with a range of \$2 to \$21.61.
- The number of local programming employees averaged one per 3,053 subscribers.
- Average capital expenditure per household for public access and local origination was \$21.34.
- The estimated local programming expenses per cable subscriber for the 5th year of operation averaged \$9.31.
- The companies dedicated an average of 46% of the local programming budget specifically to public access.
- The cable television companies bid an average of 14

shared or dedicated channels for access.

- All 31 companies bid studios and use of equipment at no charge to the public. Seventy percent bid a mobile van, and most dedicated special facilities to schools, libraries, and/or community agencies. Many funded non-profit agencies as public access administrators and facilitators.

Brian Owens, CTR, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1981.

THE HOMETOWN USA BICYCLE TOUR

TV-MILLBURN The Junior League of Orange and Short Hills presents a weekly series of news and public service programming. They also contributed \$8,000 for the local access equipment.

WOMEN WHO CARE: LIVING WITH DISABLED HUSBANDS Marin Community Video tells the story of wives with disabled husbands, on duty, **ALONE**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

FIRE STATION #7 Children in grades Kindergarten-Three learn about fire safety and fire prevention from this Syracuse Fire Prevention Bureau television series.

CAPITAL 10,000 10,000 participants, 6.5 miles and the Austin Community Television cable access coverage provides an exciting documentary.

'QUILTIN' BEA The Lytton Springs Quilting Club and 80-year old member, Bea Strawn, present a past way of life in this Texas cotton region; captured by the sensitive videography of Ann Mundy.

SUNDAY AT THE WAT THAI Thailand's culture and religion were brought to the U.S. by immigrants from Southeast Asia. With this program, Rick Carter looks at that culture & religion with a focus on a temple in Southern California.

JUST BLURT IT OUT John Helmore of University Community video prepared this program with high school students and a local counseling center. It answers the question, "How can they talk about sex & birth control."

SHUT-IN This captivating, sometimes spooky, video art piece is the 1st effort of Lumiere Productions in Capitola, CA. They use an abandoned house with images and sounds donated by the participants and other friends.

BEST OF BEVERLY BLOSSOM The Focal Point/Champaign-Urbana Communications present a portfolio piece of the works of this local choreographer.

FEDERATION TRUNKLINE

A BANG-UP JOB of Convention planning was done by NFLCP'er CINDY KUPER and the folks in Atlanta. Most folks left saying that it was even better than East Lansing (and you know how great that was). Two days before the convention opened, CINDY, MONICA WHELAN, (our own) ROBIN WHELAN, and DICK RICHARDS could be seen darting in and out of the seventh-floor Fed office/suite in the Baltimore murmuring, "We just had a major crisis." But by the time the registration tables opened, it seemed like all was Under Control . . . The delegates' meeting started out small, but by the end of the conference, almost 70 members were participating in the adoption of advocacy resolutions, election of new board members, and debate on the long-term plans of the Fed.

THE CROWD AT THE CONVENTION topped 500 this year, and panels kept everyone busy.

. . . BRIAN OWENS wow'ed 'em in the access philosophy panel by analyzing the access movement of the past, present, and future in terms of the

"birthright folks" of the early Sixties, "community TV people," "minor league TV," and "amateur TV" (all you out there with home video). After the discussion/debate one audience member remarked, "It's interesting to see people like SUE BUSKE and DAVID HOKE disagreeing on the way things should be done!" . . . MIKE WEX's panel answering questions ad infinitum on the subject of audience measurement techniques (but the room was still packed!).

WORD HAD IT that other hot sessions were BURWELL WARE's video/social change discussion with JULIAN BOND and IRWIN HIPSMAN and (who else?) GEORGE STONEY and about a hundred audience members . . . Also, NANCY BICKNELL's session on using small computers seemed to need a whole conference just to do justice to what JOHN HAYNES, DEBBIE HILL, and MARY MASON had to say. It was really the talk of the town! . . .

And not to be missed was WTBS' BILL TUSH at the presentation of the Hometown USA Awards luncheon (as well as GREG VAWTER's appropriate introduction!). Junior League programmers from Millburn, NJ actually had their paper hold the presses so they could run a front-page pic of the group picking up their Hometown award in Atlanta! Way to go!

NOBODY COULD TOP the keynote from RALPH LEE SMITH. Ralph gave us all a rundown of the recent "telepublisher" theory of cable that warmed the pride of all who listened . . . Sunday's discussion/brunch on the First Amendment issues of cable was a knock-out topper to the week with CONNIE CARLSON almost stealing the thunder from super-panelists BOB PEPPER, CHARLES FIRESTONE, and ROGER FRANSECKE of TPT. It was anyone's guess as to who gave the

best presentation, because they were all top-notch and fitting summations to the week's activities.

HIT RELEASE OF THE WEEK was the absolutely impressive party thrown by **CABLE AMERICA** at **CABLE ATLANTA**. The theme was "stripped to the walls," since the party was held at the bare-walls studio that C/A just took over from TBS. The temperature climbed literally, and the free drinks and back-to-back bands just added to the determination of everyone to "let off steam." Invitations were handed out on paper fans, and true forward-thinkers brought them and used them to maximum effect . . . Of course, some folks did it up so well that night, that they barely made it to the Cable News Network tour the next afternoon. It took some struggle, but the group made it to the NFLCP-sponsored bash the next night at The Excelsior Mill, as well . . . Best Party Costume award went to **DREW SHAFFER**, who was still wearing two-thirds of his three-piece suit in what seemed like 100-plus-degree temperatures.

PERENNIAL FAVORITES . . . The debate (perennial) to change the name of the NFLCP to something more memorable was simply not the same without **GARRETT McCAREY**. (You will remember that he suggested EIEIO last year, though no one can remember what it stood for.) . . . **DAVE BLOCH**, that way-out guy was at it again. Showed up in a Winnebago stocked floor-to-ceiling with TV equipment from United Cable. Serving as the access Chas. Kerault, Dave lives in this environment as he travels from United franchise to United franchise demonstrating video/cable/access. Were we dreaming or did we hear him exclaim as he drove out of sight, "See you next year, and keep up the fight!"

Susan Bednarczyk, CTR, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1981.

1982

AT&T divestiture . . .
Personal computers . . .
Vietnam Vet Memorial . . .
The Falklands . . .
ERA . . .
John Belushi . . .
"E.T." . . .
Jane Fonda's Workout . . .
Space Shuttle
Columbia . . .
Barney Clarke . . .
Tylenol . . .
John DeLorean

Cable Legislation

■ The Cable Telecommunications Act of 1982 (S. 2172) was introduced by Barry Goldwater. It prohibited franchisers from regulating rates, codified the FCC's franchise fees rule, required cable operators to set aside a percentage channels for PEG access and leased access (but also limited the number of channels for these purposes).

■ This legislation was opposed by local governments and public interest groups and it never reached the floor of the U.S. Senate. However, in the fall of 1982, House Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Tim Wirth and other legislators directed The National League of Cities and the National Cable Television Association to negotiate an acceptable agreement to both parties. NCTA and NLC began negotiating in September, 1982.

National Office

■ NFLCP staff estimated they were handling 13,000 telephone requests per year (50 calls per day) at the national office.

■ In addition, NFLCP was responding to 10 to 15 written requests for information daily.

■ NFLCP began distributing "Cable TV and the Cities," a report on the conference with the same title. The conference was co-sponsored by NFLCP and the University of Wisconsin Extension Program in 1980. Barry Orton wrote the report.

■ The NFLCP's membership office in Ohio closed as all NFLCP functions were consolidated in the Washington, D.C. office. Robin Whelan retired after two years of work in Kettering, OH for NFLCP, but she remains a stalwart NFLCP activist.

Hometown

■ Ann Mundy and Quincy Cablesystems in Quincy, MA volunteered to coordinate judging the Hometown USA Video Festival. There were 200 entries.

"Exploring Community TV"

■ More than 600 people attended the NFLCP's fifth annual convention in St. Paul, MN.

■ The conference presented 150 speakers and 70 workshops.

■ Julian Bond, state senator from Georgia, opened the conference with an address advocating greater minority involvement in cable TV.

■ The keynote address was delivered by long-time access advocate Everett Parker of the United Church of Christ; he asked, "Who Will Benefit from the New Technologies?"

■ The George Stoney Award was presented to Tom Borrup for his years of dedication to access in Vermont, San Diego, and Minneapolis and as volunteer editor for *CTR*.

■ A new award for organizations with an outstanding commitment to access was established; the first "Community Communications Award"

went to WELM of East Lansing, MI and Berks Community TV of Reading, PA.

Northeast

■ After Warner's franchise was renewed in Somerville, MA (SCAT) Somerville Community Access TV formed to run access. SCAT president Bob Matorin hailed the move to an independent access management as positive, since for the cable operator "Somerville access was a no-win headache." After years of access wars, SCAT received a \$200,000 equipment grant and \$85,000 annually from Warner.

■ The Boston Community Access and Programming Foundation (the access corporation) was established in March with a 50-member board of directors.

Central States

■ NFLCP's Central States Spring Regional Conference was held at the University of Cincinnati. Don Langley was regional coordinator and Roxie Cole was regional representative to the board.

■ The Michigan Cable Awareness Day (coordinated by NFLCP regional advocacy coordinator Suzanne Skubick) was used to educate legislators in Michigan. Access advocates called for a state mandate for access channels on every cable-system. Robin Whelan worked at the NFLCP's booth where participants could watch Hometown USA videotapes.

■ NFLCP's Central States Fall regional conference was held at Calumet College in northern Indiana.

■ The ELRA Group of East Lansing conducted cable audience research and showed that potential subscribers gave public access a rating of 5 (out of 18) when they listed their programming preferences.

Midwest

■ In the one and one-half years since cable came to Iowa City, 400 individuals and representatives of 65 organizations took video production workshops, and they programmed 5 to 10 hours per week.

■ The Kansas City Area Hospital Association began using the institutional network which linked 12 health care facilities.

■ NFLCP's Midwest Spring Regional Conference was held in Iowa City.

Southwest

■ In January, 100 people attended the NFLCP's Southwest Regional Conference at the University of Texas. The Conference primarily featured technical workshops.

■ In May, NFLCP's one-day seminar in Dallas focused on audience development, program development, talent selection, and organizing pre-production.

Mountain States

■ Dave Bloch assumed coordination of the Mountain states region.

■ Tucson completed its franchising process.

■ Quote . . . Unquote was programming six hours daily, and they put effort into getting the shows listed in the local papers. Quote . . . Unquote also held their first telethon and they developed a credit system for volunteers with funny money (George Stoney's picture appeared on the highest denomination bills).

Far West

■ As a part of a rate increase agreement, Viacom agreed to provide Marin County an access channel (separate from LO). Viacom also agreed to provide \$58,000 worth of equipment and \$35,000 a year

for operating costs. Marin Community Video was given a contract to provide training and coordination.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM NEW TECHNOLOGY

We are in the midst of a communications revolution that is bringing about a shift in our way of living that dwarfs our shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy a century ago. Every means of work and relationships will undergo change . . . but even our best experts on the workplace are unable to forecast what life will be like two decades from now.

By 1934, many stations were owned by nonprofit organizations, especially schools and churches. Commercial interests promised fervently that they would fulfill the needs of education, religion, government and cultural interests if they were made licensees. Some members of Congress were unconvinced that these promises would be kept. Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York introduced an amendment to set aside 25 percent of the radio frequencies for use by nonprofit entities. He argued that a substantial portion of the new form of communication, which is dependent on a scarce natural resource—the spectrum—should be dedicated to public service.

The Wagner-Hatfield amendment was defeated. Within months, the vast majority of nonprofit stations were forced off the air, to be replaced by commercial operators who were largely indifferent to public service programming.

The same thing occurred in television. First the licensees, starved for programs, were eager to have their schedules filled from the public sector. Then, as the commercial value of time increased, public ser-

vice programming was curtailed, until now it is practically nonexistent.

There is no reason to think that cable will fare any differently in the normal course of events. A recent survey of cable operators by *Multichannel News* revealed that, while there is a substantial amount of local programming now, they expect to reduce this service to about two percent of total programming within the next five years.

It is unfortunate that the coming of cable is being accepted uncritically by communities from one end of the country to the other. Surveys show that most respondents think that cable is television signals, sports channels and Home Box Office.

Even though the vast majority of our cable systems still have only twelve channels, the time of the small cable operator has passed. Because of its high capital requirements, it seems inevitable that virtually all of cable will fall into the hands of seven to ten leading companies, who may also own most of the other telecommunications facilities in the United States. We must be prepared to deal with that possibility in making communication policy.

It is fashionable in Washington to wax lyrical about new telecommunications technologies and services, such as direct broadcasting from satellites, that are not even in place yet.

It is fashionable in Washington to wax lyrical about new telecommunications technologies and services, such as direct broadcasting from satellites, that are not even in place yet. We are told, without one iota of proof, that marketplace forces will take over where regulation leaves off and that they will guarantee that the public interest will be splendidly served because deregulation will foster widespread competition.

The fact is that, almost without exception, the businesses that are engaged in telecom-

munications already enjoy a monopoly and are reaching for market dominance. They want multiple ownership and cross ownership of broadcasting stations, cable systems, newspapers, telephone channels and computerized data banks. They are busily restructuring themselves, both vertically and horizontally, to control all phases of communication from the manufacture of hardware to the production and dissemination of programs.

For our very survival, we cannot let the government wash its hands of rational policymaking in telecommunications and of oversight of the means of communication. Unless we move quickly to stop deregulation and to have consumer protection legislation passed, the communications revolution will take place with the American people as its victims rather than its masters.

Our communication system is the crucial lifeline of our democratic institutions. Vital social issues that center in communication urgently require us to become advocates for the ethical principles we all claim to be guided by. There is no substitute for speaking out.

Everett Parker, *CTR*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1983.

HOMETOWN USA VIDEO FESTIVAL WINNERS

Between the Motion and the Act Falls the Shadow, Reynold Weidenaar, New York, NY

Diapper Dippers, Fran Pinter, Greendale, WI

A Dollars and Sense Decision: Recycling in Millburn, Evelyn McKinley, Maureen Fitzgerald and Judy Gollust, Summit, NJ

Fuzz Bowl, Gregg Grinnell, Everett, WA

House Rich, Cash Poor, Michael Shapiro, Kathleen Kenny, Cort Madera, CA

The Jan Jarrell Show, Ron Wheeler, Woodhaven, MI

Le Stomp/Impressions in Clay, Alan Ginsberg and Joel Pfeiffer, Madison, WI

Pitt—"The Family," Kyle King and Steve Fos, Dallas TX
TV Millburn, Jane Houston and Judy Cash, Short Hills, NJ

Un-Tattoo You, Sharon Goldenberg, Encino, CA

CABLE TOP TWENTY

1. As Tiers Go By
2. 96 Tiers
3. 16 Tiers, And What Do Ya Get
4. These Boots Were Made For Franchising
5. You Are My System, My Only System
6. Leader Of The Fed
7. I Am A Lineman For The Company
8. By The Time They Wire Phoenix
9. It's My Franchise And I'll Cry If I Want To
10. Franchise Sally
11. I'm A Consultant For The County
12. I Heard It Through The Shadow Trunk
13. I've Been Workin' On The FRP
14. Who Put The "M" In "MSO"
15. L/O Dolly
16. Please Deregulate Me, Let Me Go
17. Nearer My MSO To Thee
18. I Can't Get No Interaction
19. As Drops Go By
20. I Got My Thrill On Head-end Hill

NFLCP Newsletter, May/June 1982

I REMEMBER WHEN . . .

•Dallas had more trained access producers than subscribers.

•Ronald (not his name) strapped our \$10,000 portable camera system into a home rigged camera mount on top

of his old car to get a trucking field shot.

•We were so eager to encourage access producers that we often caught ourselves delivering porta-paks to someone's house; "pizza delivery access" we called it.

•A Trainee picking up the AC cord, carefully examining the plug, bewildered among all the wires, and asking "Where does this go?"

•Access Traffic meant a staff edited series composed of zaney training tape experiments, as well as quality produced shorts; it also meant the exciting parade of people old and young from all over the city that came and are still coming to use Access as their own.

•The General Manager got upset to see a union organizer in the cable offices, only to be told that he was an Access producer working on a program about the history of the labor movement.

•The producer was urged to tilt up on his head and shoulder shot; and he vehemently replied "No way am I going to show my bald head!"

Jan Sanders, Community Access Manager, Dallas, TX, 1986.

1983

Sally Ride . . .
"The Right Stuff" . . .
The Betty Ford Center . . .
Michael Jackson . . .
"The Day After" . . .
Grenada . . .
"Flashdance" . . .
The end of M*A*S*H . . .

Congress Is Nearly There

■ The National League of Cities (NLC) and the National Cable Television Association (NCTA) reached a compromise on comprehensive Cable leg-

islation. The full contents of the compromise replaced the language in Goldwater's S. 66. The bill was endorsed by NLC and NCTA and passed the U.S. Senate in June.

■ House Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Tim Wirth (D-CO) introduced a companion bill in the House of Representatives. However, in spite of NLC's endorsement, widespread opposition from cities and public interest groups grew. The bill passed the House Telecommunications Subcommittee, but Commerce Committee Chairman John Dingell blocked it from coming up for a vote in the Commerce Committee. Dingell told NLC and NCTA to go back to the bargaining table.

The National Office

■ The national office began distributing the following books: *Creating Original Programming For Cable TV*, *Cultivating The Wasteland*, and *The Video Register* (profiles of 700 community programming operations).

■ After editing *CTR* for three years, volunteer editor Tom Borrup turned the editing over to NFLCP staffer Joan Gudgel in Washington, D.C.

■ *CTR* issues under Joan's direction were *Computers in Community Settings*, *Access and Management*, *Institutional Networks* and *Labor and Cable*.

NFLCP Convention Highlights

■ NFLCP met in Portland, OR, drawing about 425 programmers from across the U.S.

■ The Hometown USA awards presentation by festival coordinator Irwin Hipsman included clips from the best of nearly 500 tapes submitted from 35 states.

■ The George C. Stoney award was presented to Dr. Everett Parker of the United Church of Christ for his 29 years of work as one of the most effective media reformers.

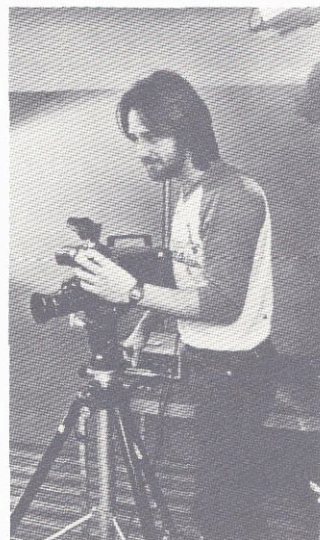
■ The Community Communications Award went to Quote . . . Unquote for getting access off the ground in Albuquerque, NM (with little funding).

Regional Activity

■ AFL-CIO staffmember Janet Coffman began Atlanta's first access show on union issues; "Inside Labor" won a local award for outstanding coverage of a special event (The International Women's Day March).

■ Madison Community Access Center (MCAC) scheduled up to 140 hours of programming on one channel each week. MCAC raised 60 percent of its funds from grants and other sources.

■ "Images of Labor," a weekly 30-minute access program produced in Grand Rapids, MI, by Don and Judy Crandall, focused on the United Auto Workers. The series was distributed to access centers throughout Michigan.



Nome Public Access TV member, Cary Bolling tapes an access program in Nome, AK.



Susan Miller interviews a representative from the A. P. Randolph Institute on Inside Labor.

■ After 18 months, Jan Sanders of Warner's Dallas system reported that nearly 1,400 people have been certified to use studio and portable equipment.

■ Austin Community TV trained 100 people per month in workshops, scheduled 140 hours of PEG access programming weekly on four channels.

■ Fayetteville Open Channel in Fayetteville, AR cablecast 27 hours of access programming per week. A survey indicated that Fayetteville Open Channel's audience represented a 6.1 share of local viewing.

■ In January, Marin Access 31 started up; Marin Community Video was contracted to cover weekly County Supervisor meetings; in a few months, 100 community groups were submitting programming for the channel. By the end of the year, 70 people had passed through the "experienced producer" tests.

■ Access started up in Honolulu; when the local PBS affiliate scaled down its commitment to ethnic programming, Oceanic Cable beefed up its support for community access; its first shows were about Samoan and Tongan culture. About 20 community groups

provided 10 hours of programming each week.

■ In January, local programming began in Nome, AK through the efforts of Nome Public Access TV volunteers; shows were produced with equipment from the community college.

■ By May, over 100 programs were played on Multivisions' Community Channel 3 in Anchorage, AK.

■ More than 1,000 people attended Portland's public access training workshops. There was a two to three months waiting list.

HOMETOWN USA VIDEO FESTIVAL WINNERS

Documentary Event

• LOUDER THAN OUR WORDS/WOMEN AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, Lydia Pilcher, Access Video of Western, PA.

• REBOUND: A DREAM COME TRUE, Mark Hayes, Warner Amex Dallas.

Documentary Public Awareness

• END OF THE OLD NEIGHBORHOOD, Lee

Richmond, Continental, Newton, MA.

• NO IMMEDIATE DANGER, Gerald Saldo and Joan Engel, New York, NY.

Entertainment

• MUSIC IN MOTION, Merlyn Productions, Viacom, Cleveland, OH.

• BUT CAN YOU DANCE TO IT. Reebee Garofalo, Warner Amex, Somerville, MA.

Documentary Profile

• LABOR MORE THAN ONCE, Liz Mersky.

• FEET, FORTRAN, AND FUTURES, Von Wagoner, Colony, San Pedro, CA.

PSA's

• GUESS WHO IS NOT COMING TO DINNER, V. Cox, Marin Community Video, San Rafael, CA.

• REAL MEN READ, Jeffrey Briggs, Public Library of Columbus, OH.

Live Programming

• KEY CLUB TELETHON, Berks Schoolcasters, Reading, PA.

• BUMPERNATIONALS, Rick Portin and Kathy Budnick, Viacom, Everett, WA.

• ATHLETES ON WHEELS, Gerry Pallor, Locus Communications, New York, NY.

Local News Magazine

• LOCAL NEWS, Nance Bollacasa, West Hartford Community TV, West Hartford, CT.

• JEFFERSON UPDATE, Brett Ward, Cox/Jefferson Parrish, Los Angeles, CA.

• SPECIAL EDITION, Midge Marrinan & Leo Goolgasian, Times-Mirror.

Narrowcasting

• GET MOVIN, Sandra Peabody, Cablesystems Pacific, Portland, OR.

Training

• LIBRARY DATA BASE, City of Southfield, MI.

Education

• HOMEBIRTH, Elaine

Middleton, Fayetteville Open Channel, Fayetteville, AR.

• I HOPE ITS NONE WE KNOW, Amy Landers, American Cablesystems, Webster, NY.

Videotext

• INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT PORTLAND, Jim Long, Portland Cable Access, Portland, OR.

• APPLEBYTES, Alternative Media Center, New York, NY.

Arts

• MI GENERAL, Ric Sternberg, Austin Community TV, Austin, TX.

• RASGADO EN DOS, Valley Cable, Encino, CA.

Creative Use of Cable TV

RHYMES OF OUR TIMES, Michael Zieper, American Cablesystems, Quincy, MA.

• GENERAL HIGH SCHOOL, Naomi Zaslow, Marple/Newtown, PA.

1984

Geraldine Ferraro...
"Where's the beef?"...
Vanessa Williams...
Yuppies...
Mario Cuomo

"Managing the Hidden Resources"

■ 725 people travel to Denver to attend the largest NFLCP convention ever—access organizations, schools, libraries, unions, LO directors, and churches; 66 workshops are represented. About 600 conference participants attend the awards banquet which was cablecast live on cablesystems in the Denver area. Drawn from 667 entries (187 cities in 33 states), 50 Hometown USA Video Festival Awards were given to volunteer-produced and staff-produced shows; there were eight honorable mentions.

■ Excerpts from Hometown winners appeared on the Home Theater Network's "Traveling America" (250,000 cable subscribers).

■ The George C. Stoney Award was presented to Diana Peck for her dedicated leadership as NFLCP Board Chairperson from 1981 to 1983.

■ Long-time survivor Marin Community Video of San Rafael, CA was given NFLCP's Community Communications Award.

■ The Midwest and Central States Regions shared the honors for NFLCP's Best Region.

■ At the convention, there was considerable concern that widespread industry cutbacks in new franchises would negatively affect the future of access and LO. Convention keynote speaker Steve Suits and teleconference participants addressed this concern.

National Office

■ Paul D'Ari, previously a staffperson for the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting and a graduate student at the Annenberg School of Communications, joined NFLCP as CTR editor and Director of Information Services.

■ NFLCP distributed a sampler of municipal access programming.

■ Based on the vote of the delegates at the Denver conference, membership dues were increased.

It Comes to Pass

■ In October, Congress passed the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984.

■ Cable rates were eliminated (in two years) except for markets found to have insufficient competition from other video services.

■ In the *House Report*, Congress stated that access regulations "serve a most significant and compelling government interest—promotion of the basic underlying values of the First Amendment itself." The legislation allowed franchising authorities to require PEG access channels.

■ Cities must establish procedures whereby unused access channels can be used by the cable operator; however, channels may be reallocated to access if demand is sufficient.

■ Cable operators are prohibited from editorial control of access channels.

Northeast

■ Sharon Ingraham (Sharon, MA) and Ed Weiss (West Newton MA) succeeded Chuck Sherwood as regional coordinators; Chuck became regional representative to the board of directors.

■ In Portland, ME, the regional conference focused on franchising issues; Sue Buske made the keynote address; regional Hometown winners were screened.

■ Rhode Island programmers called for help in enforcing state access commitments (some operators have franchises in perpetuity); NFLCP made a presentation in Providence, RI in September to urge formation of a state access corporation.

Mid-Atlantic

■ Reading, PA hosted a regional conference in October. Reading Mayor Karen Miller delivered the keynote address. The focus was on franchising the first day, administration and regulation the second, and volunteer producers the third.

■ Cate Steele (Montgomery County, MD) and Deanna Pigg ported an active programming co-coordinators of the Mid-Atlantic region.

■ Arlington Community Television in Arlington, VA reported active in programming schedule, including a science fiction soap opera, music programs, and a documentary on Africa.

Southeast

■ About 80 people attend NFLCP's Southeast Spring Regional Conference in Atlanta—the first regional event in over a year.

■ The NFLCP board of directors accepted a new NFLCP Chapter in the Tampa, FL area.

■ NFLCP's Southeast Fall Regional Conference was held in Tampa, Florida. The focus was on program production.

■ Frank Turano and Bob Sepe were elected co-coordinators for the region.

■ Access on Tampa Cable premiered in November; 200 community producers were trained.

■ 48 hours of live access shows marked the start of Miami's Educational Telecommunications Center; 130 producers were certified; cable reached 150,000 homes.

Central States

■ Roxie Cole and Access Dayton hosted the Central State's Philo T. Farnsworth Video Festival; 90 entries were received.

■ Chapters in Michigan and Cincinnati were active; Michigan's August retreat was followed by a Central States regional leaders' retreat near Cincinnati in September.

■ The Cincinnati/North Kentucky Chapter issued press releases and circulated petitions in protest of access cutbacks in the area.

Midwest

■ NFLCP's Midwest Fall Regional Conference is held in Minneapolis, MN.

■ Bootsie Anderson (Roseville, MN) served as regional coordinator.

■ Access cutbacks were proposed by Group W and Rogers Cablesystems in St. Paul and Minneapolis, MN; Warner proposed substantial cutbacks in Milwaukee, WI.

Southwest

■ NFLCP's Southwest Fall Regional Conference was held in Dallas, TX. It focused on community programming administration.

■ Roxanne Snell (Norman, OK) was re-elected regional coordinator. Alan Bushong (Austin, TX) is elected regional representative to the board.

■ Fayetteville Open Channel celebrated its fifth anniversary with a "Fun and Fundraising" telethon. The Channel averaged 27 hours of programs per week.

INDUSTRY CUTBACKS

The widespread industry cutbacks on community programming was a major concern at NFLCP's seventh annual convention. Many participants were from Dallas, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Omaha, Atlanta, Miami, and other cities where community programming is being threatened.

In his keynote address Steve Suits told the gathering of community programmers that public access and local origination programming are in trouble.

"Whenever the economy worsens and interest rates are high, cable owners begin to cut corners and usually begin by proposing to reduce or eliminate local programming. The reason they start there is simple: cable owners view public access and often local origination as major expenses that generate little or no revenue."

"These cycles are for public access the cycles of poverty. With each cycle local programming in cable is substantially injured and is less able in the future

to realize its opportunities and promise to the communities. Indeed, I cannot think of a single example when an initial substantial commitment to public access was reduced for economic reasons but in better economic conditions was restored to its original commitment. Once it is lost, it is lost for all time to come."

"[W]e are in the depths of another crisis...[and] most of the best moments for public access have now passed."

The community programming cutbacks were also the topic of discussion during the teleconference between community programming proponents at the convention in Denver, and NCTA and FCC officials in Washington, D.C. The teleconference addressed the question. "Will the Marketplace Deliver Community Programming?" A hypothetical case study was presented in which a cable operator that promised substantial innovative services, later approached the city for major system cutbacks, including significant reductions in support for community programming.

Char Beales, NCTA Vice President for Programming and Marketing, defended the operator's cutbacks. "The cable operator is in business and makes his business by pleasing his subscribers. If there are people who want the service, the cable operator will be more than happy to provide it. I go back to the fundamental question though: do you provide more than most people actually want? The cable operator is in the business of bringing out what his subscribers want and fulfilling that need. In this case they don't really want all channels...so the operator is cutting back...If there is a demand for more channels later, then a good businessman would provide more channels, if that's what the subscribers really want."

"There are a number of things that bother me," responded Frank Spiller, President of Francis Spiller Associates, "when I hear this notion that community programming is a service that not many people want. The fact is we are dealing with a whole new kind of television. Yet, the

tendency is always to evaluate it by the rules of conventional broadcast television. We have to break this cycle somehow and get on to the business of using this great communications opportunity for the benefit of communities."

Sue Miller Buske, Executive Director of NFLCP, argued that cutbacks of community programming are coming before the medium has had a chance to develop. "It typically takes 3 to 4 years for community programming to mature. What we are seeing around the country is that one year or one and a half years into the operation of local programming, there will be a request for a major cutback. The operator will say there are not enough people using the equipment and the channel is not active enough.

"One of the things I find interesting is this: will the marketplace deliver anything if people don't know it exists?... You have to educate the public and that is not a process that takes two weeks, two months, or two years. It is a long term process...and it is not that much different than developing and marketing any other new product."

Paul D'Ari, CTR, Vol. 7 No. 2 & 3, 1984.

LOCAL PROGRAMMING AT NCTA

Trade shows create an uncanny microcosm of the cable industry as a whole, reflecting its values and directions. At the last NCTA convention I attended in 1982, there seemed to be quite an interest and focus on local origination and public access programming. Have things changed since 1982? Where are the industry's current priorities?

In 1982, there were all kinds of new companies being formed and announced at NCTA. The exhibit floor was jammed with new enterprises hocking their services. However, by 1984 many of these companies either never got off the ground or found cable's blue sky too overcast to meet financial forecasts.

Those companies exhibiting at NCTA this year were there to do bottom-line business, and no longer had the promotions budget to lure conventioners to their booths with expensive give-aways. In contrast to 1982's free t-shirts, towels, tote bags, etc., this year's convention offered apples, granola, and beef jerky.

Fewer Equipment Vendors

What concerned me most about the 1984 exhibit hall was the lack of equipment vendors targeted for L.O. and access application. In 1982, the hall boasted some nine exhibits designed specifically for the access and L.O. production market. There were numerous mobile vans on display, editing systems, cameras, character generators, switchers, etc. This year, I counted only four major video production vendors.

I asked the video vendors on the floor why they thought there was such a dearth of video production exhibits, and why they decided to attend. Bob Wickland, Manager Customer Service for Microtime, Inc., said that the NCTA show has become much more software oriented. As a result, the technical types aren't attending NCTA anymore. Instead, they are going to the NAB Convention. Since those purchasing equipment do not attend NCTA, the amount of actual business is very slim.

Encouragement From Software Vendors

Although the hardware commitment to local programming was unimpressive at the convention, the software end was more encouraging. With all major program suppliers represented on the exhibit floor, it is easy to target those with strongest interest in community programming. Neither ESPN or USA networks showed as much appreciation of local programming. This can be explained by their 100% commercial broadcast orientation. The program director at ESPN said their service covered most sporting events with its own crew and equipment. They are occasionally interested in outside

sports coverage, but the quality must be topnotch.

Mary Alice Dwyer-Dobbin of Lifetime has some mildly encouraging words. First, she explained most cable networks have come to realize that producing their own original programming is too costly. As such, Lifetime and others are doing less and less production. As a result, acquisitions from independent producers are increasing.

Clearly the most encouraging news came from Curtis Davis, Vice-President of Programming for Arts and Entertainment (A & E). A & E is another service which relies entirely on acquisition.

An Absence of Community Programming Workshops

Besides the exhibit hall, the NCTA convention workshop sessions provide another glimpse of the industry's priorities. In 1982, two convention workshops were devoted to community programming. This year, there were none.

Was the NCTA, the conference organizer, sending a message to community programmers—that local programming is simply not important to the cable industry?

This was not at all the intention, according to Char Beales, Vice-President of Programming and Marketing for NCTA. "We wanted to give local programming a profile at the convention but were unsuccessful due to lack of interest," said Beales. Conference organizers planned to host a panel entitled *Making L.O. Viable Economically*, but prospective speakers approached by Beales all declined the invitation. "MSO's were much tighter this year in their allocation of who came. Local programmers, who had attended in previous years, weren't allowed to this year."

Adam Haas, CTR, Vol. 7 No. 2 & 3, 1984

L.O. AND SURVIVAL

When I think of L.O. and survival, I get a vivid image of people huddled around a gaffer-

taped, bandaged portapak that's chortling and wheezing, like pioneers huddled around a dying fire, wondering about their next meal.

Or I get visions of cable systems with these large, dusty mobile vans sitting outside in the cold, in an unnoticed corner, like some big woolly mammoth waiting for extinction.

Survival is tough. And yes, we as local cable programmers are struggling to keep our medium alive and well. But I think we want to do more than survive. We want to grow and continue to develop as an important, viable communications medium.

Like the pioneers who tilled the soil, farmed the land and built a good economic base, we need to use all our resources and develop them. Just as the pioneers eventually developed business that created towns and cities, local cable programming now has to build its *business*.

Local Origination is a business. We have a product and we have customers. We are in the business of local entertainment and information services. We are an integral part of the cable operation, with a direct umbilical cord to the nerve center. If the crop doesn't come in, we suffer. In other words, our business is cable business and if the cable system does poorly, we're in trouble. If the system does well, we benefit directly as well as indirectly (i.e. more subscribers to watch local programs).

It stands to reason that if we develop our part as an important "piece" in ensuring and enhancing the success of the cable business (i.e. satisfying customers through delivery of entertainment and information services), then our business is successful and we not only survive, we get bigger and better. Sounds simple. But, you ask, how do we demonstrate our importance and concern when some of us are still at the "barn-raising" stage?

There are two areas where we can currently demonstrate our importance: public relations and marketing. And we can show our concern and good business sense by developing a new revenue

source through local cable advertising.

By increasing our value through public relations, marketing, and ad-supported programming, we become an important, if not critical, part of the cable television operation. It means L.O. is good business and good business not only survives, it *thrives*.

Good business doesn't mean compromising or sacrificing good programming. On the contrary, if we are to do our jobs well, if we are to be successful, we must meet the needs and interests of the community. We must offer diverse, entertaining, and information programs that are of interest to all of the different segments of the community.

Cut me out and post.

Cope Syndrome Symptoms

Cope Syndrome Symptoms

Check all that apply.

3 checks indicate COPE traces—monitor closely.

6 checks indicate COPE inflammation—treatment must begin immediately.

15 checks indicate COPE DOPE—victim incoherent and may have to be surgically removed from the studio for treatment.

Focus

- () What was it that was happening this morning?
- () I've started misplacing things like keys, notes, phone numbers, my embossed tweeker...
- () I can't remember who was supposed to do that.
- () The jobs seem to bunch up and I don't know which to do first.
- () I loose my place in the middle of things, like editing.
- () Serious conversations are tiring and my mind wanders.

TBC

- () I'm always in a hurry.
- () I'm always running late.
- () I'm putting in a lot more hours but I never catch up.
- () I may have a lot to do, and the interns are playing video games.

I'm not saying we're in the promised land, but if I were a pioneer looking over all our unexplored territory, I'd say there was a "heap of opportunity" and a "heap of growing" left to do. I'd say we're going to need some new skills and some new ways of thinking to do it, but then, that's how L.O. got here in the first place. We *have* survived, and we've accomplished an incredible task. We nurtured and developed a new communications medium against some pretty tough odds. With new approaches to our business and a little exploring, planning, and thinking... it's only the beginning.

Nancy Bicknell Larkin, *CTR*, Vol. 7 No. 1, 1984.

- () I'll do it myself. It's easier than having to explain.
- () When I'm doing something, I always get deflected before I finished.
- () I sometimes find myself preoccupied and suddenly realize I should be doing something else.
- () I don't have any quiet time.

Pan

- () Everything gets done as a crisis.
- () I work hard but don't seem to accomplish much.
- () I didn't get it done last year and it's not likely for this year.
- () I prefer doing three minute tasks.
- () I find I'm consciously procrastinating.
- () I don't think anyone is watching these programs anyway.
- () Nobody so much as thanks me anymore.
- () I know I need more sleep, but I can't seem to relax.
- () I dream of whitebalancing on multicolored pigs wearing ugly epitaphs.
- () The community people, whom I've liked, are becoming a real pain.
- () It's just no fun anymore.

Warning: The Surgeon General finds that even trace amounts of COPE Syndrome may be hazardous to your health.

Cut me out and post.

I fit on the refrigerator door.

Do Not Bronze.

1985

National Offices

■ *The Video Register* listed over 850 community programming centers.

■ NFLCP raised \$10,000 in direct mail fundraising in the first quarter.

■ NFLCP hosted a conference in February for national non-profit organizations interested in using cable access.

■ Fred Johnson produced "After The Act" for NFLCP, a videotape analyzing the implications of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984.

NFLCP Members Are . . .

Paul Braun, NFLCP's mountain states regional representative to the board of directors, surveyed NFLCP members and found the following:

■ Members renew because they "want to show support."

■ Over 70 percent make programming and equipment acquisition decisions.

■ 75 percent are between the ages of 25 and 44 (c'mon AARP!).

■ 40 percent have belonged to NFLCP for more than three years.

■ 50 percent have been involved in local cable programming for over three years.

■ Most feel they will continue working in community programming.

"Charting New Waters"

■ About 900 people attended NFLCP's eighth annual na-

tional convention in Boston. Special guests from France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Canada, and Costa Rica, marked the largest international participation in an NFLCP Conference and it formed the core of one of the most stimulating series of workshop tracks—the international track.

■ Margie Nicholson (Chicago) stepped down as chairperson of the NFLCP board of directors, and Jan Leshner (Tucson, AZ) succeeded her.

■ Cable industry lawyer George Shapiro and University of Baltimore law professor Michael Meyerson debated the relationship between cable and the First Amendment.

■ David Matthews, President of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, delivered the keynote address and reminded local cable programmers what is special about their medium.

■ The George Stoney Award is presented to Roxie Cole, founder and executive director of Access Dayton.

■ NFLCP's Community Communications Award for Public Access goes to Austin Community Television for its longevity of operation, degree of community support, and commitment to volunteerism. In 1985, ACTV was programming over 170 hours of original shows each week. Their staff has now grown to 17. The annual budget was \$400,000. Clearly, ACTV had come a long way since cablecasting tapes under the open sky on Mt. Larson in 1973.

■ The Best Region Award went to the Northeast.

■ NFLCP's first Community Communications Award for Local Origination is presented to Group W Channel 9, serving 13 franchise areas in St. Petersburg, Largo, and Pinellas, FL. Channel 9 was pro-

ducing 60 hours of original programming weekly.

■ NFLCP also awarded its first Outstanding Chapter Award to Colorado's Front Range Chapter in the Denver area.

■ NFLCP delegates updated the advocacy platform in order to make it relevant to the new cable law.

Hometown USA Video Festival

■ The Hometown USA Video Festival received 1,000 entries from 250 cities in 35 states. With this total, Hometown surpassed, for the first time, the number of entries submitted to NCTA's local ACE competition.

■ Tapes were sent out for preliminary judging to 9 programming facilities: Irving Community TV (Texas), Sharon Community TV (Massachusetts), Arlington Community TV (Virginia), Tampa Cable (Florida), GRTV 100 (Grand Rapids, Michigan), Cablevision of Littleton (Colorado), Cupertino Community TV (California), and Viacom Cablevision (Seattle).

■ 217 finalists were selected and Austin, TX; Portland, OR; Boston, MA; New York, NY; and Kalamazoo, MI were among the cities comprising about 20 percent of the roster.

■ And about 40 percent of the finalist programs were shows originally shown on systems owned by American Television and Communications Corporation, Rogers Cablesystems, Warner-Amex, Group W, and Cablevision.

■ Berks Community TV in Reading hosted the final judging. 62 Hometown winners were presented awards at the banquet by *CableVision's* Robert DiMatteo; cities with multiple winners are Austin (6), East Multnomah (Ore-

gon), Kalamazoo, Tucson, Marin County (California), and Tacoma.

■ Austin Community TV receives a special award for outstanding achievement in community programming for its excellent showing in the '85 Hometown festival.

900 GATHER IN BOSTON

"Community Television: Charting New Waters," NFLCP's eighth annual national convention, held in Boston on July 11, 12 and 13, was the largest gathering of community television programmers to ever assemble in one place. There were over 900 conference participants in Boston this year, compared to 725 at the convention last year and 250 at the first NFLCP convention in 1978. The significance of this tremendous growth in a very short period of time is that it reflects the development of grassroots community television around the country . . . and around the world.

At the opening general session of the convention, Sue Miller Buske, executive director of NFLCP, stated that ". . . we have more people involved in local programming in the U.S. than ever before. We estimate that . . . over 250 communities who did not have activated access or local programming channels a year ago, have activated those channels in the last year . . . (I)n 1975, we had 50 to 70 community video centers in the United States. Now we have close to 1200. That is an incredible growth pattern."

There was a new mood at this year's convention. The guarded optimism of past conventions was replaced by a sense of confidence that had never quite materialized before. This sense of confidence appeared to be largely due to the enactment of federal cable legislation. The intense legislative battle over the past five

years that threatened community television is over. The clear consensus at the convention was that community programmers came out ahead. In a debate over the relationship between cable and the First Amendment with George Shapiro (a spokesperson for the cable industry with the law firm of Arent, Kintner, Plotkin, and Kahn), Michael Meyerson, professor of law at the University of Baltimore, told the convention participants that the Cable Act is a victory for access programmers, because in the Act, Congress has expressed clear support for access programming. He said: ". . . Congress has just told us . . . that free speech interests protected by public access are not merely significant, but are the most compelling interest . . . [According to Congress], the right of all the people to communicate with their neighbors is a compelling interest of the highest order. Congress has told us that public access is the video equivalent to the electronic soap-box, the electronic parallel to the printed leaflet. In other words, the First Amendment needs public access and we now have the 'Congressional Housekeeping Seal of Approval.'"

Paul D'Ari, NFLCP Newsletter, Vol. 8, No. 2 & 3, 1985.

Access Is Public Power

In his keynote address at the NFLCP national convention, David Mathews, president of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, expressed hope that community television will play an important role in revitalizing the old town meeting (in which all citizens learned about and participated in important community decision-making). The importance of this possible development cannot be over-estimated, he said, because one can make a pretty good argument that America and the democratic tradition was invented in 1633 when the

first American town meeting was held in Dorchester, MA. A healthy democracy depends on the cultivation of the kind of community dialogue that was present in the old American town meeting, Mathews said.

There is something different about your organization. I first got a sense of it when Berks County [Berks Community Television in Reading, PA] got involved [with public forums]. Berks . . . doesn't look like a TV station. It looks more like a Dorchester type town meeting.

"My sense is there is more to what you are doing than is captured by the word TV . . . It has to do with more than just electronics. And . . . [you] have a potential to experiment in a way that is not possible with other organizations . . . [I]f that is the case . . . it would be of great interest to a lot of us in this large republic, if we could understand better how community television and community forums could work together to help the community learn the community's business."

In closing, Mathews urged the NFLCP to take advantage of its enormous power to revitalize an important form of democratic decision-making. "[I]t is very important for you not to under-estimate your power . . . The people who have moved human history, who have given us all kinds of new forms—have been people who have commanded public power. That's your power. And that's why all of us are very interested in what you do with it."

Paul D'Ari, NFLCP Newsletter, Volume 8 #2 and 3, 1985.

Cable Is A Monopoly

You will undoubtedly hear the cable industry argue that cable faces plenty of competition from the alphabet soup of new communications technol-

ogies—DBS, SMATV, MMDS, LPTV and others. When you hear this argument, its time to act as though you were born in Missouri and say "show me." Show me where in my community, anyone has real access to this brave new world. Don't tell me these supposed competitors will be here soon—until you show me that I can choose them, all I see is one player, the cable company. Where I come from, we call that a monopoly.

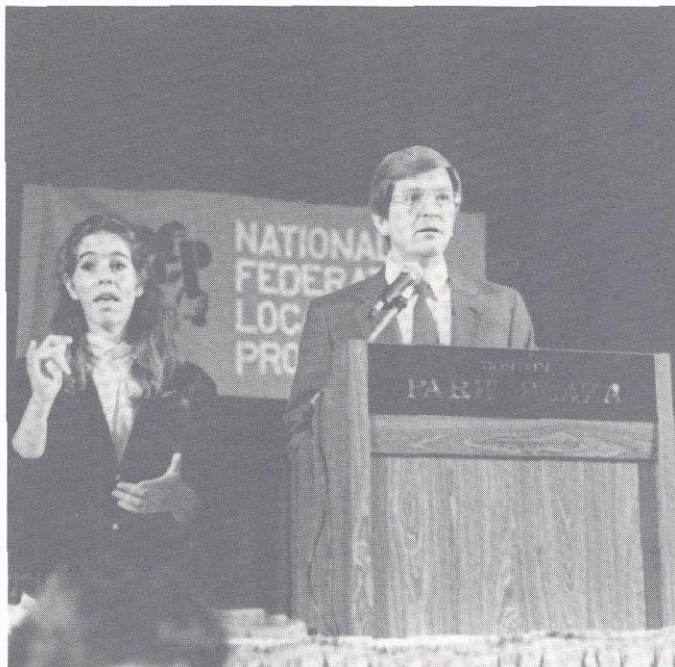
Also, remember that while some offerings on cable, such as movies like "Airport '78" and television shows like "Leave it to Beaver," can be provided by competitors like the video cassette recorder or the over-the-air broadcaster, there is no other way for local community programming (i.e., access) to be shown to a community except for the cable system. And that goes double for like programming and call-in programming.

In the words of the late Ithiel de Sola Pool:

"The time may come when a broadband telephone network offers head-on competition across the board, but for now, the denial of monopoly power is ludicrous. Whatever alternate means of communication exist, nothing else can offer the equivalent of the multi-service broadband cable running past a municipal franchise to string its wires and dig the streets. One can imagine a railroad owner in the nineteenth century denying being a monopolist because anyone refused access to a train could use a horse and buggy." (Technologies of Freedom, p. 173, 1983)

Access programming has left the horse and buggy era in the dust. Congress has declared access to be a critical component in the electronic marketplace of ideas. It is now up to all access programmers to help realize this goal.

Michael Meyerson, CTR, Volume 8, #2, 1985.



David Mathews delivers the keynote address at NFLCP's convention in Boston.



900 community programmers meet in Boston for NFLCP's annual convention.

TECHNOLOGY

The Community Videot— A Resource of Technical Tips

By Dave Bloch

In keeping with the historical theme of this issue of CTR, this episode of VIDEOT takes you back to those early days of "little video." Remember Videofreex, Raindance, Radical Software? Rewind your lifetape to about 1970, and think about the times when videotape really was hands-on.

Q: I'm trying to find somewhere to buy that "Porta-pak" videotape recorder I saw some people using at a rally in Berkeley, but all the salespeople I talk to just look at me funny or tell me to "go look over in Sports." Where can I find one?

A: You might call an audio-visual equipment dealer (the people who sell projectors to schools), and ask them for a "Sony VideoRover." Sony likes to invent composite names for things—their tape recorders and "Tapeorders," and so on. Make sure you get everything you need: VTR, camera, AC adapter, batteries (buy a spare!), microphone, tripod, carrying case, etc. And buy some videotape, while you're at it.

Q: I just went to try out my new Porta-pak, and guess what?? I took the tape out of the box, and they wound it backwards! The shiny side is in, and the dull side is out! I've been using audio tape for years, and anybody knows that tape gets recorded on the dull side—oxide is really just rust, after all. So, I stuck a couple of pencils in the reel hubs and manually rewound all the tape onto the takeup reel, shiny side out. And my machine won't record or play back! What's Sony trying to pull, anyway?

A: Sorry, but videotape is recorded on the SHINY side. Those tiny tape heads move so fast in relation to the tape, that the oxide has to be very highly polished or it would wear the heads down in no time. The dull finish on the back is an anti-stick material that helps the tape slide over the guides and keeps it from sticking to itself on the reel. Grab your pencils again, rewind that tape like it was, and it should

work fine. Unless you've already fried your heads.

Q: What's the difference between the Sony AV-3600, the AV-3650, and the AV-8650?

A: First, none of these is the porta-pak; that's the AV-3400. The 3600 is the basic plug-in VTR. The 3650 is the editing VTR, that you would use on the record side in an editing system. The 8650 is Sony's color-capable VTR.

Q: I've been seeing ads for new "U-Matic" machines, that use 3/4-inch tape in a plastic cassette (No threading!). Is this new equipment going to replace all my 1/2-inch VTR's? Should I buy these machines instead?

A: It looks like another short-lived industry fad to me. Panasonic tried it with their half-inch cartridge, and remember that old Cartrivision system? The machines are big, heavy, slow to thread themselves, and you can't edit with them! I'm sure 3/4-inch will soon be joining those other plastic-enclosed dinosaurs on the scrap heap.

Q: What's the big dark spot on my picture (tape enclosed)?

A: Oh no!! Somewhere, sometime, you pointed your camera at the sun and burned the vidicon tube. Remember that your precious vidicon is exposed to outside light whenever the lens is uncapped and open, EVEN IF THE CAMERA IS TURNED OFF. If the burn was not too bad you could try aiming the camera at an evenly-lit white wall for a hour, but the tape you sent shows your tube is dead. Use it as a paperweight.

Q: Every time I try to edit the tape I've shot on my porta-pak, my edits break up. What's wrong?

A: You might have something wrong with your editing VTR, but I doubt it. Most likely, you are not allowing enough time

for "preroll" before your edit points, either when you edit or in your original shooting. It takes several seconds for the head and tape motors to get up to speed, and you have to allow for that. When you shoot with your porta-pak, wait a good TEN SECONDS after starting the tape rolling for every shot. When you edit, back the reels up at least FIVE SECONDS—preferably ten.

Q: My access center has just been through a flood, and all my VTR's were completely soaked in filthy river water and crud. Is there anything I can do?

A: Yes! A similar event happened recently in Michigan. The folks there took the machines out of their cases, hosed them off thoroughly, and dried them in a school cafeteria's lunch warming ovens. After standard lubrication, they went right back into service. (It's hard to keep these machines down.)

Q: I've got this GREAT videotape of a rally in Berkeley, and I want to show it on our CATV system. When I talked with the cable company, they said they couldn't do it because "1/2-inch videotape just won't play over the system." But I heard that some people have been running tape like mine on cable for a long time. Where do I go from here?

A: I don't know. Maybe someday a group of community video producers like you might get together and form a national organization to support each other. They could put out a newsletter, send tapes around (have a contest!), and maybe even have an annual National Convention. Who knows, it might even be held out there in California where you are! Till then, there are some video groups around that are showing tapes to each other and developing their use of small-format video. Look for them at your next rally.

Dave Bloch is director of community programming for the Davis Cable Cooperative in Davis, CA.

PUBLIC POLICY

Franchise Fees and Access Funding

This is the third and final part of the series of roundtable discussions with Sue Miller Buske, executive director of NFLCP; Joseph Van Eaton, an attorney with the law firm of Spiegel and McDiarmid; Michael Meyerson, a law professor at the University of Baltimore; and W. Randolph Young, an attorney with the law firm of Miller and Young. They spoke with CTR editor Paul D'Ari.

In this edition, they examine franchise fees and access funding. The session opens with a discussion on the impact the franchise fee section of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 may have on access funding. The franchise fee section states that in new franchise and re-franchising agreements, access capital costs, required by the franchise are not counted as a part of the franchise fee. The legislative history states that franchise fees include "only monetary payments made by the cable operator and does not include as a fee any franchise requirements for the provision of access services, facilities, or equipment." This implies that monetary access payments other than for capital costs made to a third party (except payments made voluntarily and not required by the franchise) will be counted toward the five percent franchise fee cap. This could create a serious problem for public access because capital costs only cover equipment, facilities and channel capacity. It does not cover salaries and other operating costs. Since local governments have the discretion to determine what is done with the franchise fee, some communities may end up with little if any funding for access operating costs.

The roundtable also examined the cable industry's argument that the collection of franchise fee money may violate the First and Fifth Amendments. They discussed how cities can best protect their right to collect franchise fees.

The roundtable closed with a discussion on the responsibilities that local governments have to fund community programming and the tensions that arise in light of these responsibilities.

CTR: The Cable Act states that in new franchise and new refranchising agreements, capital costs will not be counted against franchise fees. This implies that access payments will be counted against the franchise fee. What does this language mean?

Van Eaton: Well, there are several ways to look at this language. First, for new franchises, capital costs are clearly not to be considered part of the franchise fee. Capital costs are not to be considered part of the fee even if those capital costs come in the form of cash payments to the city or access corporation for the expressed purpose of procuring equipment, facilities and anything else that would be considered a capital cost.

Second, for new franchises, nothing the cable operator offers to provide voluntarily will be counted against the franchise fee. However, it must be truly voluntary, and cannot be included in the franchise agreement.

Finally, in old franchises [signed before October 30, 1984] this provision does not apply. That is, cable operators can be required to make cash payments, and this money would not be subtracted from the franchise fee.

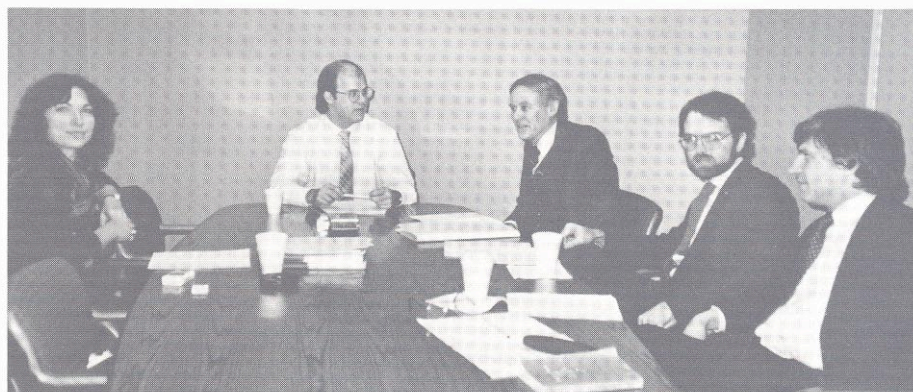
Buske: I find this provision troubling because it clearly discriminates against the third party management model. In other

words, if an access center is run by the cable company, the cable company can be required to hire three or four staff people without their salaries being counted against the franchise fee. But, if a separate non-profit corporation is running access, the access center cannot receive funds from the cable operator for staff salaries without having that money counted against the franchise fee.

There is something inherently wrong with this provision. This double standard is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that in recent years, most newly created access operations are managed by separate non-profit corporations and many of the older cable-company run access operators are converting to third party management.

CTR: Are there ways a city can maximize the forms of payments-in-kind, excluding capital costs, that can go to a non-profit access corporation from the cable operator, without making a substantial dent in the franchise fee?

Meyerson: You can make the cable company responsible for supplying staff to the non-profit access corporation. That is a payment-in-kind. However, the cable operator would select staff, and the non-profit organization may have no role in the selection process.



From left to right: Sue Miller Buske, executive director of NFLCP; Paul D'Ari, editor of CTR; W. Randolph Young, a partner at the law firm of Miller and Young; Joe Van Eaton, an attorney with the law firm of Spiegel and McDiarmid; and Michael Meyerson, a law professor at the University of Baltimore School of Law.

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Young: I think it is reasonable to get the cable operator to furnish staff for a non-profit access corporation. The access corporation can set policy and control staff, but as Michael just said, the cable operator would select the staff. But it is a compromise, and there is a good chance that it will never be counted against the franchise fee.

Buske: Is there anything that prohibits the cable company from entering into an agreement with a third party organization to manage access and is the money they pay for that service totally separate from the franchise?

CTR: And how much can a city "urge" a cable company to enter into this separate agreement with an access corporation?

Young: If the side agreement is voluntary, it does not count against the franchise fee. If the franchising authority does not require it, if it is not required as a condition of granting a franchise or renewing a franchise—I think there would be a strong supposition that it is really voluntary and

safe under the Act. Whether it is voluntary or not is a factual situation.

Meyerson: I think one has to be very careful about telling cities that if they "urge" such an agreement as opposed to requiring it, they will be OK. I would be reluctant to tell a city: "twist arms a little, but don't break them." It is going to come down to a decision of whether or not the access payments were voluntary. The more a city "urges" voluntary payments, the more likely those payments will be found involuntary.

Van Eaton: However, it is permissible for a city to require the cable operator to explain what will be done to provide access services. And the city can assert its authority to oversee and regulate any subsequent changes in the plan. This is important because if a cable company initially works out an agreement with a non-profit organization to manage access, the operator would not be able to unilaterally terminate the contract. The city has definite interests in exercising their authority in such cases.

CTR: How would you advise an access corporation to proceed if money for operating costs from the cable company dries up?

Meyerson: I think it is important to make business arguments. Access advocates need to convince cable operators that access is good for business; it is an investment, not just an obligation.

Buske: A considerable amount of audience measurement is being conducted in relation to access viewership. This research is showing that there is a much larger audience for access than was traditionally thought. Several recent surveys also show that the access audience is a highly desirable one. Access audiences are voters, they are active in their local governments, they are active in their community, they are opinion leaders. Catering to this audience is clearly a sound business decision.

Young: Access can also attract subscribers. If an individual is not particularly interested in entertainment television, but has kids in school who will be involved

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with some productions, you better believe that person will subscribe to cable.

Meyerson: Also keep in mind that if any of these new communications technologies become an actual threat to cable, community programming may be the only service uniquely associated with cable TV. It may be an important selling point.

Van Eaton: If an access center's operating costs dry up, it would also behoove access advocates to redouble their efforts to develop political connections with the city. Working with the city is really important. If the cable operator discontinues its funding of access and is in violation of the franchise agreement, it is going to be largely up to the city to press the issue. In addition, the city is a potential source of funds and if the city can be convinced that it is wise to continue funding access, then access may obtain additional funding.

It is also important to look beyond the city and cable operator for funding. Access operations should generate revenue from memberships and seek financial support from local businesses. Foundations may also support access.

CTR: The cable industry is arguing that within the next couple of years franchise fees will be declared unconstitutional under the First and Fifth Amendments. What's your response to that argument?

Young: Some people in the cable industry claim that with the franchise fee, they are being taxed and that is burdensome and violates the First Amendment. They say that the franchise fee is a form of taking private property without appropriate compensation, and violates the Fifth Amendment.

In my view, the franchise fee is a legitimate source of revenue because it compensates the city for the use of the public rights of way. The cable operator is making a permanent occupation of the streets and the air space above the streets; the public has a reasonable right to extract fair payment for such use. It is just like paying for an easement to use private property.

You can go further and say that franchise fees are necessary to pay for the cost of regulation. However, I would be careful with that argument. By relying on the cost of regulation argument, you begin to

back yourself into a corner. You may end up in court having to justify why you need five percent of the operator's revenues.

Van Eaton: Does your argument depend on a finding that public utility poles and the public rights of way are not a public forum?

Young: No. These utilities are paying for the space they use. They are paying for an impingement on aesthetics. Their use of poles and city streets do not add to the environment. When they dig up the streets, even though they repair them, the streets are never as good as they were. And there is always the nuisance of their blocking traffic.

Meyerson: How does your argument square in cities where the cable operator pays a utility pole fee to another utility?

Young: Fees paid to the other utility are strictly for covering the proportionate cost of the poles and the ducts because they are expensive to install and maintain.

It's been a productive 10 years for all of us. *HAPPY 10th to the NFLCP!*

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- Huntington Beach Cable Channel 6 Working Group
- The City of Huntington Beach, California
- The Public Cable Television Authority of West Orange County

salute the NFLCP for maintaining high levels of professionalism in cable television programming!

However, the franchise fee is for the occupation and installation of facilities on public property.

CTR: Is there anything to the argument that franchise fees may violate the First Amendment, but only if those fees are not used for cable related purposes?

Meyerson: The Achilles Heel for the cable industry's argument is that if they are right, if the collection of franchise fees for general revenue is unconstitutional—I think it is perfectly permissible to collect franchise fees to fund cable related activities. Even in the newspaper context, it has been held that there is a difference between taxing them freely for general revenue and using the money for specific [and related] purposes. Therefore, one could argue that franchise fees are far less susceptible to a constitutional challenge if the money is being used for access, regulation, and the determination of local communications policies.

Van Eaton: So, comparing newspapers to cable, as the industry likes to do, doesn't

really determine the outcome of the franchise fee issue?

Meyerson: No, but in this case the newspaper analogy is somewhat useful. Newspapers have the highest realm of protection in the world of mass communications regulation. And even with newspapers some courts have held that you can regulate a fee if it's used for governmentally limited purposes. So the usefulness of this

analogy is not that it determines the issue, but that it opens the issue.

Young: I think, even with respect to newspapers, one could argue that permanent occupation of public space should be paid for. On the other hand, you have got to be careful of a knee jerk reaction by the courts. When it comes to newspapers you've got to be pretty careful.



*Happy 10th
to the
NFLCP!!*



CONGRATULATIONS ON OUR JOINT 10th YEAR ANNIVERSARY

The support from the National Office, the National Board, and the Central States Region has made the past 10 years successful for us both.

A very special thanks to Sue Buske for her dedication and vision.

Roxie L. Cole, Executive Director

and

The Access Dayton Board of Trustees

Aaron Sheaffer, Chairperson

Serving the public on Viacom Cablevision of Dayton Channel 30

Meyerson: Let me just add one more thought on this issue. General taxation of a newspaper is bad because it implies a power of government to penalize a newspaper if it doesn't like the content by raising taxes. It's potential to serve as a penalty for conduct is what makes a tax on newspapers unconstitutional. In the cable franchise fee area, the franchise fee cannot be used as a penalty for conduct, because there is a five percent ceiling. It seems to me that this is another way to distinguish the newspaper tax and the cable franchise fee.

Young: There is another point that is worth making. The Cable Act is a negotiated compromise between the cable industry and the cities. The cable industry received numerous concessions including rate deregulation. As a quid pro quo for these concessions, the cities got the five percent franchise fee. One could argue that the industry is receiving value in return for the five percent franchise fee, and therefore, it is not burdensome.

Buske: With respect to the use of franchise fee money, I think we face a tremendous public education problem. I fear that far too many cities will pour the franchise fee into general revenue. I find this extremely disconcerting. Since we are living in an information-based society, local governments need to put resources into telecommunications planning and subsidize public service telecommunications innovations.

Young: One of the problems is that people in city government who are interested in cable tend to be lower down in the hierarchy. It is unlikely that a local government will have much interest in cable

unless an elected official or someone in the high executive level decides to take the issue on and make something of it.

Cities are always hungry for revenues, and the franchise fee is an easy way to generate revenue for the general fund. Franchise fees are only used for cable related purposes in forward looking communities who realize the potential of cable.

Meyerson: The best way to get the cities' attention is with the proverbial carrot and

stick. The carrot is that using franchise fee money for cable related purposes is good public policy because the money can be used to increase the benefits that the city can draw from cable. The stick comes from the idea that while the courts may determine that the collection of franchise fees for cable related purposes is constitutionally permissible, the placement of this revenue in the general fund may be determined unconstitutional. If the court rules in this way, cities that placed franchise fee

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money in the general fund may be required to return all that money it has been collecting over the years to the cable operator.

CTR: Let's say we have a public access center that has been operating with support from the city, and the city decides it wants to use the money for something else. Maybe it's because the city doesn't like the programming, or maybe it wants to put more money into government access. What are the First Amendment issues here?

Meyerson: If you can prove that the city stopped funding public access because it didn't like the programming, you clearly have a constitutional violation. The problem is proving the government's motive.

I would also argue that there is a grave constitutional question if the government takes money that was being used for public speech and uses it for its own speech.

Young: I think the courts have held that the government has a right to be a speaker. However, government cannot impinge on anyone else's right to be a speaker. I think

that in the case you mentioned, where a government set up a funding scheme to support government access and public access and then tries to cut out public access, I think there may be a serious constitutional problem.

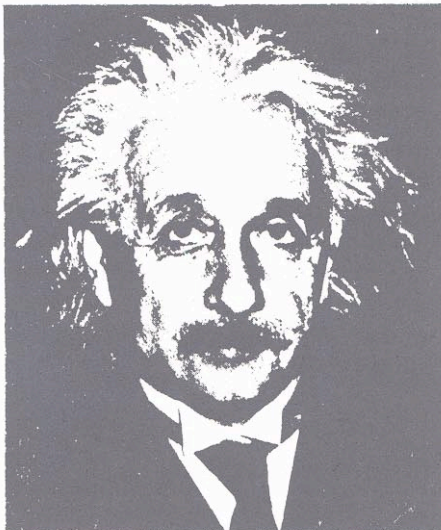
Van Eaton: However, there is no set formula for public access funding and government access funding. There is nothing in the constitution that requires 50 percent of the franchise fee to go to public access and 50 percent to go to government access. I think you can find legitimate cases where 90 percent goes to government access and 10 percent goes to public access. I would hope the government would study community needs and interests and develop an appropriate funding scheme based on the results of a careful study.

Buske: During the last year, there have been a number of troubling cases that relate to what we are discussing here. In one case, a municipally-owned system shut down its public access channel because the city council didn't like a program on the channel. In another case, public funding was allegedly put in jeopardy

because a local government was offended by gay programming on the public access channel. In still another case, a non-profit public access organization is being dismantled because the city is uncomfortable with some of the programming and there are personality clashes; it looks like the city is going to be taking over management responsibility for public access in that community.

It is clear that some local governments are not aware of the Committee Report that accompanies the Cable Act; it says, "Access channel requirements are narrowly drawn structural regulations that will ensure a diversity of information sources without government intrusion into the content of programming."

Young: I think these examples raise serious legal questions, not only under the Cable Act, but under the First Amendment. I think whenever it does happen, access advocates need to challenge the local government and point out the constitutional problems. If it is challenged head on, most politicians will back off. Few politicians will want to take on the Bill of Rights.



"... Freedom of communication is indispensable for the development and extension of ... knowledge, a consideration of much practical import. In the first instance it must be guaranteed by law. But laws alone cannot secure freedom of expression; in order that every man may present his views without penalty, there must be a spirit of tolerance in the entire population. Such an ideal of external liberty can never be fully attained but must be sought unremittingly if scientific thought, and philosophical and creative thinking in general, are to be advanced as far as possible."



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The Cable Franchise Fee and Access Programming

By Henry Geller and Catherine Boggs

Over-the-air television, with its single channel, has been much constrained in allowing citizens access to its mass media facilities. In the decades since cable television has emerged, it has been heralded as a much more effective medium for such access programming, both locally and nationally. But the high promise of cable access programming has not been fulfilled, primarily because of a serious lack of support money (as well as organizational defects). And the 1984 Cable Act may well exacerbate the problem.

"The Cable Franchise Fee and the First Amendment," a recent paper issued by the Washington Center for Public Policy Research, argues that the cable franchise fee as it now can be used and often is used, is unconstitutional. The paper also argues that there are strong policy and legal reasons to use the fee for access purposes. To do so would not only take care of the constitutional problems, but by helping cable access reach its full potential, it would also promote the true diversity of cable programming envisioned.

The Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 was a serious departure from previous FCC policy in that it permitted franchise fees collected by cities to be used for any purpose. Thus, under the Act, cities are not required to use the fees for cable-related expenses, such as covering their costs of regulation or to support access programming. Local governments can and do devote the money to general revenue purposes.

Despite the Cable Act, there is strong case law indicating that non-cable uses of the franchise fee are improper. In 1983, the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Minneapolis Star and Tribune Company v. Minnesota Commissioner of Revenue* that a tax which singles out the First Amendment speaker is unconstitutional.

In that case, a major newspaper challenged the state of Minnesota's tax on ink and newsprint. The state was not attempting to interfere with newspapers' free speech, but merely to raise general revenue funds from a profitable business. Nevertheless, the Court found that a tax

which singles out the press, and thus threatens First Amendment rights, is permitted only if necessary to achieve an overriding governmental interest. The need for additional revenue was held not to be such an overriding interest; the state clearly can raise revenues by general taxes that include but do not single out newspapers.

In our view, this analysis applies fully to the franchise fee in the cable television area. Cable is without a doubt a medium of expression protected by the First Amendment, as the Supreme Court has just made clear in *Preferred Communications v. City of Los Angeles*. While the precise nature and level of that First Amendment protection is not yet clear, it is enough, for the present discussion, that cable is a First Amendment medium.

Further, the franchise fee, especially as it can be used under the Cable Act, is certainly a tax. In fact, there are recent cases where cities have used the fee exactly as its other taxes are used. For example, in 1980, the city of Erie, PA apparently used its cable fees to pay off a \$3,000,000 city budget deficit. Los Angeles has just passed an ordinance allowing the city council to use franchise money for general fund expenditures. There are similar examples elsewhere.

Clearly, the use of franchise fee money to defray the legitimate regulatory costs of cable is constitutional. These regulatory costs, which the city must be prepared to demonstrate in any lawsuit, vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In a city with a mature cable system, it is likely that these costs would amount to less than one percent of the cable operator's gross annual revenues. Given that franchising authorities are permitted to collect a five percent franchise fee under the Cable Act, the franchise fee is a source of additional revenue over and above the cost of regulation. In light of our analysis, the use of this "additional" money for other than cable-related purposes provides cable companies with a legal basis for largely escaping their franchise fee obligations and for claims of repayment of sums ille-

gally collected. Significantly, there are pending lawsuits in the lower courts raising this issue. The issue, in short, is not only festering but likely to be explosive.

This is emphatically not to say that franchise fees should be reduced to a level that only covers the cost of city regulatory activities. There are other cable-related purposes for which these funds could lawfully be used. Foremost, of course, is funding support for public, educational and governmental access programming, since this approach not only would not be harmful from a First Amendment perspective but would actually enhance cable speech.

The use of cable-generated fees to support PEG channels is fully consistent both with FCC and legal precedent. Most important, PEG access channels fulfill two basic purposes of the Cable Act—to "assure that cable systems are responsive to the needs and interests of the local community," and "that cable communications provide the widest possible diversity of information sources and services to the public." Such a use of the fees would also appear to pass constitutional muster: PEG access support achieves an overriding governmental interest—in this instance, promotion of the First Amendment itself.

As a policy matter, we argue that the public interest would be well served by dedicating a substantial portion of the franchise fee (everything above the cost of regulatory expenses) to support PEG access activities. In our paper, we propose that part of the fee be used for local access purposes and part be used to support national access activities. The proposal is thus similar to one urged by Chairman Wirth of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Consumer Protection and Finance in February 1984.

Under our illustrative proposal, cable operators would pay a four percent franchise fee. Cities would allocate a sum of up to one percent of the funds for regulatory purposes and any remaining amount of the one percent plus an additional one percent would go to local access activities. The remaining two percent would be paid to a national access programming fund,

which would be used for producing high quality programming for distribution to local access systems at minimal or no cost. As Chairman Wirth stated in the open letter describing his proposal, the goal is to "assure that both local and national access programming is adequately funded so that the availability of such programming can be a reality for the public."

The legislative route is now foregone, in all likelihood. But the cities, under the leadership of the NLC, can and should act together to accomplish the same goal. And in this connection, they might consider cooperative arrangements with local broadcasters, particularly in the public broadcasting arena. The art of statecraft is to foresee a problem and take constructive action before it boils over. The cities now have such an opportunity.

Henry Geller is director of the Washington Center for Public Policy Research. Catherine Boggs is on the staff of the Washington Center for Public Policy Research.

Henry Geller, Alan Ciampercero and Donna Lampert are the authors of "The Cable Franchise Fee and the First Amendment." It will appear in the Federal Communications Bar Association Journal. The study was funded by the Benton Foundation, but the views expressed are solely those of the authors.



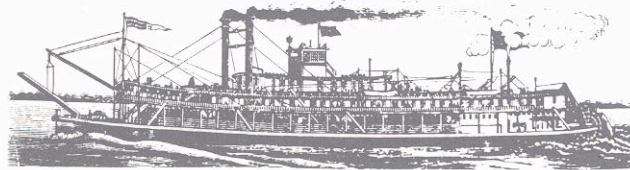
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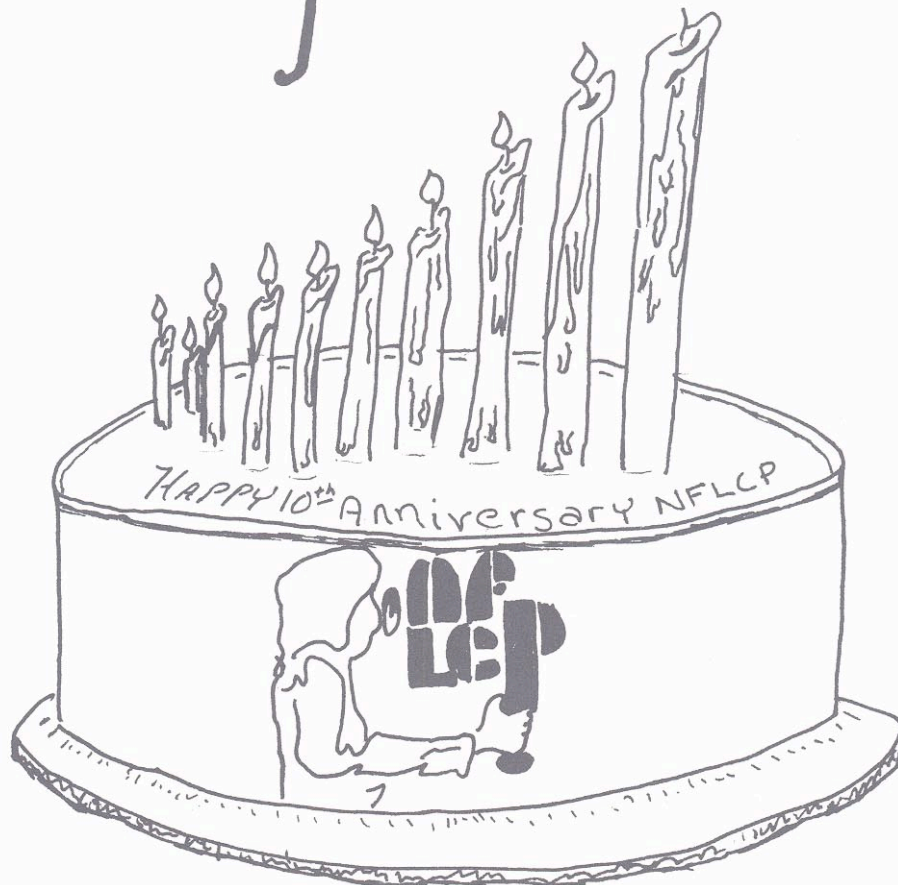
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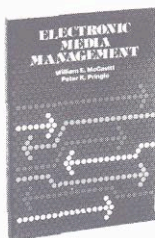
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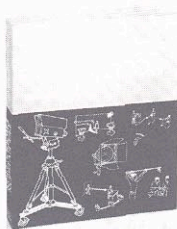
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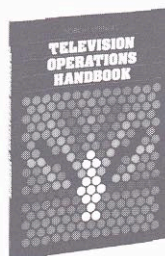
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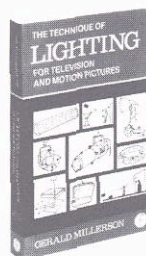
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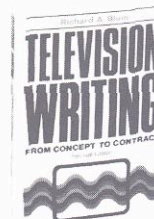
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